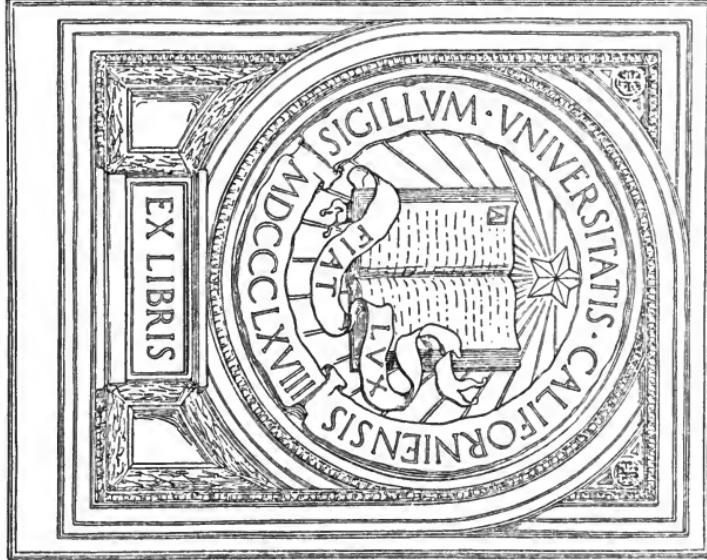


The Land Where The Sunsets Go

Orville H. Leonard



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When a desert man drifts into a strange town he takes no letters of introduction and there's no one to vouch for him. Over his after-dinner cigareet in the Mesa Hotel office, he drops a casual remark as to the trail by which he entered town and the name of the last town he left, and the ice begins to melt. Mutual friends are discovered, reminiscences follow, and he is identified.

Howdy, Stranger! I come from the town o' Golden Spur, on the edge of that Desert over yonder.



THE LAND WHERE THE SUNSETS GO

SKETCHES OF THE AMERICAN DESERT

BY
envelope
ORVILLE H. LEONARD, 1868 -



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1917

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TO THE WILL-O'-THE-WISP OF THE DESERT
AND
TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIS LIGHT

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SALUTATIONS

PREFACE

Stranger, I ain't no naturalist
An' I ain't no poet, either,
But, by the great horned toad o' the desert,
I ain't no liar, neither.

O' course, I foller'd the Will-o'-the-Wisp,
An' I heered the fairies sing.
Didn't I see the Injun shoot,
An' his hawk with a broken wing?

In the mountains I've seen the dawnin'
An' felt somethin' inside me swell,
Jist like flowers a-bloomin'
Deep down in my ole think-well.

So I reckon that the desert
Is both Hell an' Paradise.
It all depends on the way you look,
An' the focus o' your eyes.

There's a whole lot more o' beauty
In the world than we mostly git,
Because we're jist plain worryin'
Or tryin' to raise our bet.

So when the world looks blackest
Jist ride by yourself a spell,
An', p'rhaps, if you hunt fer beauty
'Twon't seem quite so much like Hell.

But, Stranger, we'll quit moralizin'.
Here's my final yell.
I couldn't a-done this book alone,
So I told these yarns to Elisabeth Bowen—
Say, ain't she done it well!

A HIGH SIGN TO THE READER AT THE CROSSING OF THE TRAILS

Howdy! I've just pulled my freight from the Desert and I'm hitting the trail for That Country Over There.

News of the Desert? Some.

Already I am missing it — I did not realize how much of desert air I had inhaled till after I had left it. Here is some of it expelled in short, quick gasps.

Stranger, you'd be surprised at some of the things that go on in the Desert, for there's a bunch of shacks here and there on its edge where there's comedy and tragedy, thrift and laziness, just as there is anywhere else. And the Will-o'-the-Wisp is there. Many I've seen pursuing him eagerly, determinedly. Besides, I've followed him myself. And in the desert mountains the Indian fairies live — I can hear them singing even now. Nonsense? Look here, Stranger, once when I told a grave and matter-of-fact engineer that I had heard the fairies singing in the mountains, he nodded understandingly and said he had heard them, also. There are too few fairies nowadays — they have

mostly been killed off or run out into the wild spots, where you have to go to find them. It's always the open season on fairies.

There's one thing the Desert does for a man — it makes him feel so infernally small, except when he's lit up, and then he feels bigger there than anywhere else, for he has more room to ramp round in. He feels small because he has a great, big, empty world to lose himself in, and by depending upon himself he finds he amounts to just what he can do with his two hands. And the Desert helps a chap to look on the little things of life in a bigger way. And there's another thing; a man gets a chance to take himself aside and talk to himself, and that's a thing we don't do any too much, except old Desert Rats, and they talk to themselves *all* the time. There are no signs of warning in the Desert, no morals and no messages. I reckon a real message is an illuminating thought, but, Stranger, if you find by chance a single one along this trail, it will not be painted on a rock. It lies, my Desert, east of the Sierras, in The Land Where The Sunsets Go. There may be hotter deserts, but all of desert life seems centered there, even to the Desert Rats. Oh, yes, I know a desert is supposed to hold no living thing, but even in Death Valley there are fleas!

Stranger, if you're an old timer in the Desert and these whiffs of desert air bring you one

bright memory of a vivid, blazing day gone by, or if you are from the crowded places and you feel a touch of warm, clean desert wind for a moment on your cheek, that will be bueno.

ORVILLE H. LEONARD

January 1917
California

DESERT MONOTONY

'Tis but a jump from hottest hell
To where the high snow flies.
'Tis but a step from a poison well
To where sweet water lies.
And in the desert they both may dwell
'Twixt dawn and the next sunrise.

Leave for a time, O my brother,
Your ledgers and profits and things.
Come away from the city's smother
To the land where the air has wings,
And you'll find in this land, or another,
The calm that wide solitude brings.

And grimness may ride close beside you
Out here where the desert winds blow,
And hunger and thirst may betide you,
And profit may follow you slow,
But there'll bloom all the soul that's inside you
In The Land Where The Bright Sunsets Go.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Do you remember your infant self when you were a lad of five, when it seemed that your Daddy was made of pelf and the biggest, finest being alive? And do you remember how long the day when your Daddy told you at breakfast time that he would bring you some longed-for treasure when he came home at night, and how you lived in the happy thought, crossed with fears that he might forget? How the speeding minutes stretched out to years and your eager thoughts, 'twixt hopes and fears, wondered, "Is it night yet?" And do you remember how bright the world, though lamps were lighted and pink clouds curled where the sun had said Good Night, when a wonderful being came striding in like a god, or Davy Crockett, with a teasing, whimsical smile on his face, but his hand in his deep coat pocket, and do you believe the promise of Heaven could bring to you the joy that you felt when you knew that your Daddy'd remembered, when you were a little boy? Or how, in nighty and bare of foot, you stood at the old stair-head listening in darkness and misery to the laughter and music down below, for you had been sent to bed? If you *can* remember all this,

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do you think that the uttermost pains of Hell could more than equal what you suffered when you looked down that old stair-well? And do you remember the lights and shadows, the days that were gladsome or blue — but whichever the kind, they would last forever, and that you certainly knew?

And do you remember your beautiful sweetheart when you were the ripe age of seven and she was just three days older, how the whole bottom dropped out of Heaven when she turned on you the cold shoulder and smiled on a boy of eleven?

And do you remember when Sam was the marshal and you were the desperado, how he chased you over the desert hot till he lost you in a tornado, and how, from the cover of sand, you shot him with a sling-shot gun and a pebble-ball, and when you had grazed his head and “got ‘im,” you didn’t like blood at all?

You have heard fierce tales of desert carnage, of lives that were bright and sad, but the desert was fiercer, its men were bolder, to you when a little lad. And do you remember the wild, bad bronco that you had roped on the plains, what a bold buckaroo you pictured yourself as you pulled hard on the reins, and how, as you roweled with home-made spurs and gave him command to “steady,” you saw him not as your own meek pony, and that he had been

gentled already? And when, with a child's small shovel and pick, you placed the brook for gold, and found in the dark old swimming hole a rusty gun, its usefulness done, do you remember the joy untold it gave to you, little Shiner? More than gold to any miner! Do you remember the heights and depths you reached in one short day's span, how you ran the whole gamut of joys and fears when you were a little man?

It is sweet sometimes to recall those days with their bright, high lights, their shadows, too, for love was about you to keep those shadows from stretching across the blue. But how deep they looked, how dense that shadow, how white that light, for life was all misery or all joy when you were a little boy.

And do you remember how, as a man, you wandered afar and saw strange things, how lying under the desert star you felt the pull of the homing strings? For you'd seen the desert of boyhood dreams and, over the mountains, a softer clime where grew big pines, where flowed swift streams down gulches where the nugget gold held an alloy you never dreamed that it could hold, for you were sure all gold was pure when you were a little boy.

OVER THE CIGAREETS

THE GREASER

Far above my little shack, perched on the very verge of an old mine dump, I could hear his mules' bells tinkling long before he came into clear vision round a jutting ridge, and high above the tinkling of those bells, could hear the tones of his soft southern voice, urging, pleading, swearing, to keep them moving, keep them in the trail, for a mule will climb either up or down, and never heed his heavy load, to munch some juicy tuft of grass that his sharp eyes have spied. The packer bore a good, round English name, Horace Older, and to all the mines in those wild, lonely mountains he packed piñon pine for fuel on the backs of his little mules. The steep and shaly cañon slopes form mighty sounding boards, and so I know he's coming before he drives into sight six little mules, each with his piñon load, and the packer behind on his old white mare.

The desert has its voices, like the sea, but they are different. I have lain upon a sandy beach, no human form in sight for miles, whichever way the eye might turn, and heard foot-

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steps and faint, whispering sounds — footsteps that never came. But in the desert mountains I hear music, perhaps the music of the spheres, who knows? And surely if it ever might be heard, 'twould be in those clear, high spaces. To me it seems that one who lives alone in these wild hills, with rocks and brush, with sun for company by day, and sky that's very clear and close by night, grows something new within himself, that comes unbidden, unannounced, that makes him over new. He may not know it at the time, but when he goes back to his kind, he's never quite the same.

But here's my packer almost at my door, and I have gone wool-gathering while I watched his train wind slowly down the narrow curving trail, each mule with its wooden burden. That wood is packed from far across the range, from its farther side where stunted piñons grow, gripping their hardy roots into the steep rock slope.

Horace brings the last mule to a stop in the space beside the shack and climbs out of his saddle with a sigh of relief. His large, round, laughing black eyes are set in a full-moon face. A thick lock of jet black hair always threatens one eye, and a close cropped black mustache shades his full red Mexican lips that speak better English than those of many of his Saxon brothers. His anatomy, above his belt, is trying to escape its bounds, for he looks fat and

pudding-soft, but he will ride the trail by day and night for weeks on end. He is gladly welcomed, for he is always good company and brings the news of every solitary prospector, every desert happening. After beans and coffee we sit on the bench outside with our pipes and gaze on the floor of the desert, three thousand feet below. Across that shifting waste of sand, upon its farther rim, a tiny oasis of green glows vividly beneath the mountains' steep gray walls. It is the City of Piñon Pine.

Horace's mother was a Mexican, his father was a Briton. His sense of humor is keen, and none of the vengefulness or sulkiness of his race has ever blossomed in him—he is all sun and laughter, and he speaks even of his own family's wrongs at white men's hands with the dispassionate speech of a cool spectator. His passionate speech is all saved up for "those damn mules," but if you see him with his foot against the belly of a sulky mule, a cinch strap in both hands, a stream of lurid talk in two languages coming from his lips, his hat in the sand, and his black, coarse hair hanging down in his eyes, if you see him thus, and speak to him, he answers with a genial smile and a flash of all his strong, white teeth. He loves a shot of hooch, and when he's all shot up, his squaw will beat him and throw him out of the tepee to sleep it off in the sand. He draws no knife under such

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punishment, but is meek and acquiescent and tells about it later with a sheepish grin.

When the pipes were going strong, he pointed across the desert to that spot of vivid color, set like a green wafer in the yellow sand.

"That spot's where I was born, and Mexicans were thick then in this desert, though it's only forty years ago. Americans were new in the country and when, one day, a white man was killed, a Mexican was accused. Then they got together a Vigilance Committee and decreed that the Mexicans must all leave town,— by noon, the day following the decree, there must not be a single Mexican left in it. I was a lad of ten, and my mother ran a little bakery across from the big saloon. The Mexicans lay low, kept out of the way all they could that night, but three Mexicans were walking down the street when there was a shot, and the Vigilantes poured out. They saw the Mexicans and chased them up to my mother's door which was on a level with the street. The Mexicans threw themselves against the door, burst it in, then shut and barricaded it. And then the bullets flew. They came splitting through the door panels, and we threw ourselves flat on the floor, so the bullets went over our heads, all but one — the one that killed my little sister. Later in the night my people left the town. The Mexicans all hit the trails for the desert in a hurry

and by midnight there wasn't one of 'em left in Piñon Pine.

"The decree took effect at noon of the next day, but at sunup, Steve Ridley, one of the Vigilantes, rode out into the desert with a forty-five in each hand. He rode for miles away from Piñon Pine until he met the last three Mexicans walking along through the deep sand with all the household stuff they could carry — all that they had left from the homes they were driven out of — and Steve Ridley shot 'em all dead as they tramped ahead of him.

"He lives now on a big desert ranch he owns, ten miles from Piñon Pine, and is very much respected."

A DEAL IN LEATHER

He was not desert born nor bred, but in those sunny, rocky hills where once the placer miner set all the world agog. There the cattle browse amid the brush, where once stood thick-sown pines; there the great day of the rocker and the sluice-box has gone by, for the rancher and the cattleman are minting surer gold. And Jerry was a cattleman, and at his birth I'm sure he was "all dressed" in leather chaps and jingling Mexican spurs. There, in his own home land, I met him and felt an instant liking for the little buckaroo.

You know those gray eyes with a touch of green in them that can look so sober and so devilish? Jerry's eyes were like that, and they could look dangerous. He was small, slender, active, and the most generous heart alive. There are some people who seem to take a certain character from their very names, and there are fewer who give their names a meaning of their own, despite all our previous associations connected with those names. Jerry was of these.

I was riding with him on one of his horses to

help him bring up a mare from the pasture below town. The poor animal had cut her foreleg badly with barbed wire and we were going to take her where she could be treated near home.

"That damn bronco you're ridin' don't walk as he does when I'm on him. Hoocha!"

He gave the cowboy cry and brought his quirt down across my horse's withers, grinning wickedly as the spirited animal danced me over the road. Just then an old fellow passed us riding an old gray mule.

"Notice that ole cuss? That's ole man Jackson who used to keep store down to Ulano when I was a youngster. Me an' my pardner, Pete Galligan, was herdin' cattle out in the hills, a long way from Ulano, an' one day Pete was goin' to the City an', as I needed a new pair o' boots, I give Pete the money an' asked him ter bring me back a pair, which he done. Along in the fall, when my cow-punchin' was over fer the season, I come in ter Ulano an' asked Jackson fer my store bill, cause I'd just been paid off fer the season an' wanted ter settle up my bills before any o' them poker sharps down ter the saloon pried my roll loose. Jackson took a long time ter make out my bill, fer the damn ole cuss was slow as the Devil, but finally he handed it ter me an' I looked it over careful.

"'That's all right, Mr. Jackson,' says I, 'all but that pair o' boots. I ain't had none

o' you, I know, 'cause I been up in the hills all season, an' Pete brought me a pair from the City an' I paid *him* fer 'em.'

" ' It's down on the bill, ain't it? ' says he.

" ' Yes, it's on the bill, but I ain't had 'em.'

" ' Well, my book is got you charged with a pair o' boots, an' it wouldn't be down there if you hadn't got 'em.'

" ' But I tell you I ain't been near this town, an' the only boots I got is what Pete brung me.'

" ' Can't help that. The book says you had 'em.'

" ' Well,' I says, ' here, I'll pay my bill, all but fer them boots, but I'll be damned if I pay fer them.'

" So I paid him and he receipted, *on account*.

" 'Bout a week later, as my Dad was drivin' by the store, ole Jackson come out an' says,

" ' Say, Mr. Howard, that boy o' yourn don't pay his bills.'

" ' He don't, eh? What about it? '

" ' Well, he got a pair o' boots in here — I know, 'cause it's down on my book — an' now he says he won't settle fer 'em.'

" ' I'll see to it,' says Dad.

" When he come home, him an' me had a set-to, an' it resulted in my payin' Jackson's bill, but I was pretty sore.

" A little after that I was in the store with Tom Laden, who was buyin' a lot o' stuff, over-

alls, sacks, grub, *and* a pair o' boots. 'Bout the time Jackson had finished waitin' on Tom, another customer come in, an' the ole man went behind the counter ter make change fer him. Tom was puttin' on his new boots, fer his others was pretty well wore out.

" 'How much was them boots, Jerry? '

" 'That's all right, Tom,' says I. 'They was \$4.50, but I paid fer 'em some time ago. You just walk up ter the counter an' pay fer the other stuff, an' ole Jackson won't never see them boots.'

" Tom done it, an' the ole man never see his feet, 'cause he was behind the counter, so he took the money fer the other things Tom bought, an' we beat it. Course, *I* didn't get my money back, but I made the ole sun of a gun ante up fer them boots. Damn his hide! I wouldn't be sittin' comf'table in the saddle now if I hadn't squared that deal."

REVERSION

On a shaly slope, far up the mountain, there lies a lonely grave. The brilliant sunlight bathes it ever, save when night shuts in, and then the stars come down so close they seem almost to touch the rude cross, made of two thin boards, where his head rests. Just above it a gozzan crops, that capped, he used to swear, a ledge of wealth untold. A foot over his head, a little zigzag trail leads to a seepage well set in the bottom of a narrow cañon, a scant half mile above. Beneath his feet, a quarter-mile below, the cañon winds, bathed ever in black shadow, and high above the trail that skirts his grave, the steep old ore grade runs around a bend, then over a high saddle, flanked by two mighty buttes, to the fierce and savage land beyond. From the slopes of those high buttes, the tops of lofty ranges, like the crests of giant petrified waves, melt into the far distance. Beyond that melting distance lies Death Valley, crouching and waiting, silent, terrible. The hawks by day fly far above, the coyotes yap at night, and rattlers coil, and lizards sleep in the sunny glare on that little mound of sand — and

that is all of life. And over all, a parching sun, and everywhere, just rocks and sand and desert weeds and brush. In Mexico he worked mines to their owners' glad relief, and other places knew him to his credit — but he always came back. He spent his life to hold this land where he is laid away. He gave up all the other lands he owned to hold this one bare tract, and lived alone in the big redwood bunkhouse, his nearest neighbor many miles away, except for three ignorant miners lately come.

That bunkhouse was his pride. When the mines were booming in the good old days, its every finished stick was packed on mule back from the western coast. Chemist, scientist, and scholar, this land of beauty in its very desolation had claimed Aymer's love and, therefore, his attendance. Trips to the cities of either coast, on carefully hoarded money, had been of no avail, for it was in that bitter time, that time of fasting and distress for miners when wildcat mining schemes had sent investors' money glimmering — "no more for them." So he came back and lived here all alone, upon one meal a day, and he was eighty then. On his nearest neighbor, many miles away, he had laid one last request, that should he be found dead upon his claims, they'd bury him upon the sunny slope. So there he is today.

Miners are superstitious, and they say that

at dusk they've seen his tall gray ghost walking about the trails, or in the doorway of his old redwood bunkhouse. They say he beckons them, to tell them where to dig to find the precious minerals that he ever swore were there. We found in his rough pine board desk the little diary which he kept from day to day, giving the petty details of the lonely man, with all his time to spend.

"Today I mended the north trail, that last week's storm had gullied out."

"Today I found a piece of float and assayed it. It went \$53.26 per ton. Tomorrow I am going to follow it up."

"Last night, I spent all night in patching up the back wall of the kitchen. The storm had washed big bowlders down against it, broken it through, and water was pouring in. Patched the wall, went out and deflected the water into the cañon, repaired the roof where the rain had ripped some shingles off. At dawn I went to bed."

"This morning, an hour after dawn, with my glasses I saw Pete and Frenchy at the collar of their shaft. It is a long way from here, but, at that distance, I can see a smile on a man's face — with these glasses. They were acting queerly and seemed hurried, which is strange for them. After looking all around, they shouldered two heavy looking sacks and took the upper trail that leads into the desert, seven miles above the cañon road that leads to Piute Springs. I did not see their

Indian partner, Pancho. Strange—tomorrow I am going over to investigate, for drills and single jacks were scattered all about. They left them so, and I do not like the looks I saw upon their brutal faces. I would go today, but I am feeling strangely weak. Why did Pete and Frenchy take the trail to Malapai Cañon? It holds no living thing and opens on to the desert, where there is no town, not even a single dobe shack. It troubles me, this matter."

And then, next day, we found him, sitting before his little redwood table. Everything in that bunkhouse was of redwood—even the shingles dripped blood when it rained. His brown old face was resting on his arms, and almost touching them, the untasted bowl of porridge that he would never eat. We buried him where he wished to lie. And then we found that diary and when we came to that last entry we hunted up his windlass rope and started for the shaft of those three Desert Rats. Their windlass was still over the shaft, but no windlass rope was on it, as we could see from Aymer's house with his powerful foreign glasses. And I found out why no rope was there when I reached that hole and was let down slowly by my friend on the rope that we had brought. *Their* rope was lying in snaky loops at the bottom of the hole, and something else was lying there, face down, with a big rock on its back. It was

Pancho, breathing, but far gone. I bound him to the rope and we hauled him up to daylight and laid him gently by the collar of the shaft. With fiery whiskey, forced between his lips, we brought him back to consciousness for a moment. He had lain in that hole for a day and a night and part of another day with a broken back, but the one flash of clear vision, which seems to come to all of us just before death, was his, and he opened his big black eyes and looked with keenly seeing glance around the shaft mouth.

"See! — no — rock — near — edge. Pete — an' — French — drop — rock — kill — me — get — my — share — thirty — thousan' — dollar."

Both the Indian and Mexican in him combined their wills to name his enemies and their deed with one last straining effort of his breath, for then he died.

We left Pancho where he lay and took the trail to Malapai Cañon. We had one gun between us and I, my heavy quirt, but none of these was needed, for where the trail dips down a short, steep slope of shifting shale into the cañon bed, we found Frenchy lying upon his back, a big hole in his chest. His sack was gone and he was past all help, so we pushed on, not up the cañon, for it ran for miles that way, then brought up short against a sheer rock wall.

No, we headed down the cañon toward the desert, and then we saw a laden sack upon the rock, and then beyond a bend, a mile below, we saw a crumpled heap, and in its hand that other sack was clutched — but Pete was dead. *His* wound was in his back. We never knew that story save what those pictures told.

Later, we left with Pancho's squaw, in Piute Springs, those sacks.

We buried Pancho on his claim, not far from that deep shaft, and as we rode down the cañon bed, after our gruesome duties done, we halted for a moment to look back before a jutting buttress of the cañon wall should blot that picture out. Aymer's rugged gozzan loomed above his little cross, and Pancho's cross was there, but lower down. The lizards darted among the rocks, while sharp and crackling, like derisive laughter, came the yapping of a coyote from behind old Aymer's shack.

The desert had come again into its own.

A NEVADA IDYL

It was in a land so thirsty that in freighting a barrel of whiskey twenty-five miles over the desert, seven-eighths of the alcohol was replaced with water — curious changes take place in the desert — albeit the whiskey did not belong to the freighter; in a land where Indian women go bathing in the lakes, when there are any, in nature's garb, quite unashamed, and care not for the white man's eye; in a land where the Hangman's Tree supported some fifteen human beings by the neck for the good and safety of the state no longer ago than when we were boys: a savage land where nature so quickly wrests her own from struggling man that where forty years ago dwelt five thousand souls, where twenty saloons kept open house all night, where music, dancing, drunkenness, sudden wealth, and sudden death ran riot, there is nothing left to tell the tale. No vestige even of the saloons, shacks, or other human activities; only the coyote who lurks ever upon the fringe of human habitation and barks and yaps at night, whose eerie chatter sounds like savage laughter, “I am only a dog, but I have outlived you; *you* were transients,

but this is my home, and I've come back into my own."

Only a mile from this scene, in the shadow of the bunkhouse, Lew McManus, with an Irish name, but a Mormon heart, squatted on his heels, his weak, good-natured face bearing a reminiscent smile. Too weak for a dangerous bad man and really too good at heart, he was only an inconsequent Desert Rat. At one time a precocious horse thief, then he became, after the sheriff had let up on him, a cow-puncher, rancher, miner, and finally a locator of claims in the vicinity of mines where a boom *might* some day start. The desert is full of such dreamers, and how they all live, God only knows! He had a desert-bred wife, and two small children camped nearby waiting for Dad to bring home some dinner, and while they waited, he squatted on his heels and told me.

"I was in a saloon over in Nevayda one time. The room was plumb full an' there was a big bulldawg there what belonged ter the barkeep. This here barkeep was some proud of that there pup an' claimed that he could jest naturally lick anything he ever come acrost. Well, while we was all standin' an' settin' 'round, drinkin', chewin' the rag, an' some playin' cards, in comes a Dago with a monkey. The little cuss warn't more'n ten or twelve inches long, an' soon as he come in, the bulldawg begun ter show signs of

bein' right onfriendly. Barkeep warns the Dago, and says he,

“ ‘Ginney, watch out fer your monk, er my dawg will eat him up.’

“ Says the Dago, ‘Dog no eat a monk. Monk licka da dog quick!’

“ Well, Sir, the fellers settin’ an’ standin’ round heerd this, an’ in them days money was easy when it come ter a game or any kind of a showdown, so they arranged ter put the money agin the dawg. Mr. Dago he showed willin’, but says he,

“ ‘My monk, he fighta with two little stick — that alla right?’

“ They all agreed ter let the monk have his two little sticks — they was only a few inches long, like two little drumsticks — an’ after the barkeep had put up his fifty dollars on his dawg, they all stood back an’ brought the dawg an’ monk inter the middle of the ring. Well, Sir, the minute that little cuss seen that bull pup, he gives one spring, landin’ right behind the dawg’s head, between his head and shoulders, an’ with one of them little drumsticks in each hand he begun ter beat that pup’s skull so fast — jest like he was beatin’ a drum — that them little sticks looked like the spokes of a racin’ sulky in action. That there hound acted like he’d discovered a hornet’s nest inside his skull, fer he run ’round like the Devil was after him,

knockin' men over, under tables, in circles, with the monk stickin' tight ter his neck, an' them two little sticks goin' like mad. The bulldawg couldn't reach Mr. Monk with his teeth, an', anyway, I reckon he was too dazed ter map out a plan of action. Well, Sir, in about two minutes there warn't no more fight left in that there dawg than in this here doodle-bug I jest put my hoof on, an' when they clawed that little monk off the dawg's back, he had them little sticks gripped tight, an' his little eyes was snappin' like a rattlesnake's.

"The Dago got his fifty all right. Yes, Sir, yer see some funny things piroutin' 'round this here country."

BOOTLEG

If you take some plain wood alcohol and add a generous dose of water in which cigar stumps have been stewed till it's rich and brown, then add a little pepper to give it the proper tang, the result is bootleg whiskey, which is supplied you as a favor in districts that are dry. It is a very simple receipt and there are a dozen more, but this will serve as a sample of the home distiller's art. More accidents, murders, broken health, and death from the desert heat are chargeable to this deadly stuff than we can ever know, and yet its makers can always count on their victims' sure support.

He stumbled into the desert town, for he could not stand upright, leading one little burro, while another trailed behind. He was a big and husky man, but his heavy shoulders drooped, his eyes were narrowed to a slit, his tongue was swollen till it filled his mouth, and when he spied the wooden trough where the desert horses drink, he kneeled against it and plunged his head in the tepid water till we had to pull him

away. And when he could speak for gasping breath, his thickened tongue mumbled out,

"Go hunt up Jack. I left him out in the desert about twelve mile. When we hit the desert below the pass, we'd a little water left. That lasted about to Soda Springs, but we couldn't fill up there, so we hiked along, an' pretty soon we must have missed the trail. An' then we got kinder loco an' our tongues begun ter swell, but I kep' a tol'able rein on me, fer Jack went ravin' wild an' he cussed the sand an' cussed the sky an' damned the blazin' sun an' shook his two fists at the air an' cussed an' cussed an' cussed. An' then he run ter his burro an' hunted through his pack till he found a bottle o' bootleg that he'd hid out from me. He tilted that bottle till it stood straight up, an' drunk an' drunk an' drunk, an' as soon as he had drawed his breath, he tilted it some more. I had jist enough senses left ter leave the damn stuff be, an' I tried to make him quit it, too, but 'twarn't no manner o' use. He'd got that bottle at Poison Springs, an' he'd jist come off a spree. An' then the burros broke away, and down in that hot sand Jack was a settin', drinkin' an' singin' little foolish songs. I couldn't carry him, nary foot. I could only walk, myself, an' I thinks I'll hit the trail somewhere an' send back ter bring him in."

He had forgotten, when he told his tale, that

he'd led his burro in, his partner's following on behind — but perhaps he did not know.

"An' I wandered all that afternoon, an' all one hellish night, a stumblin', crawlin', fallin' down, an' all this hell of a day. I didn't know where I was at, I jist follered my nose, an' hiked. I wasn't keepin' ter no beat trail, plumb instinct brung me here, an' poor ole Jack is out there yet, so you jist find him pronto."

A dozen horsemen saddled quick and took to the desert floor, tracking the miner's weaving steps till they saw in the distance a darker huddle against the yellow sands. When they rode close, they saw a man beneath a big sage-bush. He lay on the flat of his big, broad back, his blackened face to the sky, while high in the air two big buzzards floated lazily. His right hand clutched an empty bottle — he had drunk his last bootleg.

RECONCILIATION

The talk was on sudden death.

He was an old miner, my nearest neighbor in the mountains overlooking the desert, and though his tall figure was slightly bent, his wide-open, steady, steel-gray eye — a sharpshooter's eye — was youthful in its keenness of vision, withal it had a look of childlike wonderment at times, and ever a kindly humor.

"There was a young feller I knew back in Coloraydo — he'd shot a feller who'd swore ter kill him, an' when this bad hombre run fer his Winchester, this young feller I'm speakin' of run faster, got ter *his* first an' pumped seven bullets inter this other feller at close range — not more'n thirty foot. One bullet would a done the work, but this young friend o' mine was so excited that he didn't know what he was doin'. O' course, he got off on the plea o' self-defense, which was right, but after that, at night, he'd sit on the edge o' his bunk, lookin' down sorrowful like, an' when I'd ask him how things come, he'd tell me,

" 'I can't seem to git the thought out o' my mind that I've killed a man, even if 'twas in self-defense.'

"Then I tells him, 'What you want ter do, Ed, is to git out o' this house where the thing happened an' where you're all the time livin' over it an' seein' him 'round. You want ter git out where they's people an' fergit it.'

"He went, but I don't know how it ever come out with him.

"I seen enough an' I don't never want ter use my gun if I can git out o' it, fer it's a awful thing ter feel that a man might be livin' this minute but fer you, even when it was a question o' self-defense. I was some hot-headed myself when I was a kid, but I don't never want ter draw a gun no more, though I was ready and willin' ter in them days.

"One time I was out on a prospectin' an' fishin' trip with a chum o' mine named Weston, up near Buffalo, in Coloraydo. One day we come across a deserted cabin. 'Twas full o' grub an' in fine shape, but the fire had been dead fer days an' we could see no one was livin' there. We built a fire an' helped ourselves ter what we needed, fer we'd left our outfit below an' was some hungry. We did that way in them days, when we found a shack on the trail an' nobody home. All any one asked was fer the stranger ter leave things clean an' ship-shape. We had a good square meal, then we pulled out.

"Weston's uncle, a feller named The Hender-

son, who lived up the gulch 'bout one or three miles above this here shack, was a pretty hard nut, an' it seems he'd bought the outfit we found in the empty shack from two fellers who'd stocked it up an' then pulled out ahead o' time. Henderson had tracked us ter the cabin, an' the next time he sees Weston he accuses him an' me o' takin' this here grub which he'd bought. Weston tells me about it an', bein' young an' hot-headed, I says ter him,

"‘Damn him, I ain’t goin’ ter let no man call me a thief, an’ when I sees him, he’s goin’ ter eat them words.’

“An’ Weston, bein’ my pardner, says, ‘O’ course. Me, too.’ For The, bein’ his uncle, didn’t make no difference ter Jim.

“In them days I was skinner, bull-whacker, any ole thing, an’ my nearest neighbor, ole Jeff Prouty, says ter me a few days later,

“‘Jack, I got a load o’ cedar posts I got ter git ter town. When you go ter town will you whack them bulls o’ mine in, them a snakin’ them cedar posts?’

“‘Sure,’ says I.

“The next day I went, whackin’ Jeff’s ox team, the wagon piled high with cedar, an’ goin’ through the woods I was walkin’ alongside the team. The day was hot an’ I took my coat off an’ throwed it on the high seat, leavin’ my Smith an’ Wesson in the side pocket o’ it, when The

Henderson come towards me, drivin' a team o' little mules he had.

"Hold on, I want ter speak ter you," I says when he'd drew up close. So he stops.

"Did you," I says, "say ter Jim Weston that him an' me stole anything from you?"

"Yes," he says, "I said them words."

"Then," I says, "you're a damn liar, an' you git down fer I'm goin' ter lick you."

"He climbed down quick, fer he was a scrapper, but he pulled out a long knife as he come, an' me with my gun in my coat pocket on the wagon seat! But I was pretty quick in them days an' I hadn't more'n seen that knife when I'd flipped my coat over the wheel an' had my hand in the pocket, but the damn gun had slipped through a hole in the linin'. I didn't wait ter dig it out, but brought it away linin' an' all an' had him covered when he come round in front o' his mule team — he was comin' some, too, with his knife raised, but when he seen he was covered he says,

"Oh, well, you've got the drop on me, all right. O' course, with a gun you got a unfair advantage at this distance."

"Yes," says I, "an' when you come at me with a knife, seein' I had no gun on me, 'twarn't nothin' unfair in that advantage, I reckon? Tell you what I'll do — I'll meet you anywhere you say an' you can use any gun you like, an'

we'll have our friends there ter see fair play.'

" He agreed ter that an' we met in a big saloon in Denver. He had a bunch o' his friends at his back an' I had mine, an' he had his gun handy, likewise me. While we was glarin' at each other, all too willin' to start the business o' drillin' holes, one o' his friends, with more sense than common, got him by the pistol arm an' begins ter argue.

" 'The,' says he, 'with two such shots as you two fellers is, *one* o' you is sure ter drop, mebbe both, an' you're married an' got kids ter think about. I don't know what this muss is all about, but 'tain't right.'

" Then one o' my friends asks me what it's all about, an' I tells him.

" 'Hell, I know Jack here didn't steal nothin' from nobody, an' it's up ter Henderson ter apologize.'

" 'That goes with me,' I says. 'If The apologizes, there ain't no quarrel.'

" After some talky talk The kind o' grins an' says, 'Well, I reckon mebbe you ain't no thief, after all, Jack, so I take back them words.'

" 'O. K.,' says I. 'An' since you've taken them back, The, they'll need washin' down an' drownin', so the drinks is on me all round.'

" We had 'em. But I reckon them words needed more o' the washin' down process, fer The said it was his turn ter do some sluicin', an'

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the last I c'n remember, The was slappin' me on the shoulder, grippin' my hand, an' proclaimin' that I was the only honest man an' that he'd trust me with untold gold.

"I reckon 'twarn't no very edifyin' sight, but they do speak o' that night yit as one o' the events o' that day, us bein' all lit up, which was some better than havin' daylight let inter us violent.

"Even in these days o' peace an' softness when a man ain't hardly let ter pack a gun, it's handy ter have it round, fer when you need it, you need it jist as bad as in them days," and he gripped the shiny butt lovingly.

For Jack still carries his old long-barreled Smith and Wesson.

HIS BEST BELOVED SON

West from the desert over the mountains many, many miles there is a land that has lain asleep since the early mining days. There the manzanita and the chaparral replace the desert cactus and its rounded gray-green sage. There tall, dark pines grow in small clumps, where once were mighty forests. There, too, deep rocky gulches cut all the brush-clad hills through which the swift roaring floods pour in the rainy time, but for eight or nine months in the year one crosses them dry-shod. Then they are dry as a lava bed and the desert is scarcely hotter, for it is a semi-arid land. There, too, crawl the tarantula, the scorpion, and the lizard, but the lizard is small and slaty-gray, not the desert lizard of every size, nor with its brilliant coloring. It is a cattle country, in a way, and in one place and another a patch of noble forest yields its logs, but the great, old mines that filled the land with eager, searching men seem dead. Though now inert these many years, perchance they are but sleeping.

It is not a farming land, though here and

there a flat, a little swale, or narrow bench will grow green things to giant size, and big, delicious fruits. All up and down, the steep gulch slopes are sown with dark green pines, with now and then a bull pine bearing its feathery bluish needles. There the deer play by the roadside and at night the wildcat calls and, in the deeper forest, the mountain lion prowls. No, it is not a rancher's land, yet it holds the charm of wild and rugged beauty that ranches could not give.

It was in this country we were hunting him, the sheriff, the old cattleman, and I, and the cattleman was telling me the story. Nature had given the cattleman a tall, strong body, but an accident at birth had twisted and deformed it, but not his heart which was big and generous. Nor had it spoiled his laugh which was ever ready and joyous. His horses, his time, and his money were ever at the call of those who needed them. He could see a cow hidden in the chamin-sal where I could see only a blur, and so he was a valuable member of the party.

"It was about thirty-five years ago he first come here an' opened a general store on one side o' the street, an' a fine saloon on the other. Niels Andersen is a Dane, o' course, as his name shows, but he talks jist like you an' me. His life has told on him, but he's still a husky feller, an' in them days he was some *man!* His blue

eyes could snap like the Devil when he was drunk, an' be the softest, gentlest eyes you ever saw when he was right, but they got, mostly, ter snappin' like the Devil, fer he got ter samplin' too much o' his stock over ter the saloon, an' the worst o' it was that when he got drunk he always wanted ter kill some one — one o' his best friends, fer choice.

"Ter this day, him an' his old chum, Ike Jamieson, don't speak, fer he pulled a gun on Jamieson in his store one day when Ike was in there buyin' something, an' if Ike hadn't got ter his gun hand pronto an' taken his gun away, there'd been doin's right then. Ole Jed Bransome, the sheriff, didn't want ter do nothin', fer he was a good feller with everybody in the County, an' Andersen an' him was friends, Andersen bein' a prominent citizen, as you might say. It got worse an' worse, though, an' one evening, 'bout dusk, Andersen come through the door o' his store, a forty-five in each hand, firin' as he come. He nicked the door-post jist behind the ear of a feller standin' there — Hell! no, he didn't know the cuss, he was jist shootin'. Then he wheeled round an' fired up an' down the street. Jed comes up ter Bill Minturn — Bill was a friend o' Andersen's an' a big, powerful feller, too — and Jed says,

" 'Bill, I don't want ter arrest Niels an' get

him in disgrace, an' make any fuss. You git him in a corner somewhere an' take them guns away from him, will you?'

"So Bill coaxes Niels ter go over ter the dance-hall, an' that's a new idea ter Andersen so he goes along, delighted with the doin' something. As they goes in the door, Niels first, Bill come up close behind him, pins both arms ter his sides, an' then another friend took his guns away. Mad! He was ready ter kill the whole town. He got about half sober next day, but he was broodin' and ugly, an' I reckon back som'ers in his mind was the drunken notion that he'd been took advantage of by his friends when they wheedled his hardware outer him.

"Now Niels was jist about all o' a man when he was sober, an' his wife was the sweetest, big blue-eyed woman you'd meet in a week, an' she jist worshipped Niels, only fer that wicked drunken temper o' his, an' Lord knows it was a plenty. She couldn't do nothin' ter make him quit, an' she couldn't do nothin' with him, neither, when he was on the war-path.

"Well, this day after his little fireworks play, he was in his saloon, broodin' like, an' there was three-five fellers in there drinkin', when Mrs. Andersen come across from the store ter speak ter him about somethin'. You know, pardner, how a crazy idea will come ter the front pronto in a drunk's brain? It did then.

No sooner he see his wife come in them swing doors than Niels whips out his two heavy forty-fives. One o' them he throws on the bunch that was drinkin', an' yells, 'Git inter that corner, you damn coyotes, an' face this way, han's up,' and he kept his gun playin' back an' forth over 'em like lightnin'. And then he turns to Minnie and yells, 'Pull up your skirts an' dance, damn you, too! I'll show you all I'm boss in my own shanty, anyhow.'

"Well, sir, that big, handsome, home-bred Indiana girl, with a look o' pain and humiliation in her blue eyes, pulled her skirts up ter her knees an' danced before that corner full o' cow-punchers, their han's reachin' fer the ceilin' an' their eyes goggled, mostly on account o' Niels' gun, an' when she couldn't stand up no more, he drove her out at the end o' his gun, an' the held-up bunch after her.

"The last o' her boys was born soon after — too soon, a long ways too soon. When Niels woke up an' all he'd done come back on him, he cried like a baby an' went down on his knees ter her. That was his last rampage, but the mischief was done. An' Minnie Andersen growed thin an' faded. You know the dead look she always has on her face, an' her whole body acts listless like an' sort o' don't care a damn.

"Now, they talk about God's mercy and kindness, so it don't seem jist square that a man's

weaknesses should be handed down ter a innocent kid — ain't that right? Karl Andersen, you savvy, was the youngest boy — him that was born soon after that dancin' an' gun party — an' he's a right husky, upstandin', powerful boy, an' he's got his mother's big, fearless, steady blue eyes, but — well, they don't look jist right.

"Niels has a heap o' friends here who don't hold nothin' agin' him on account o' the past, fer there's one fine thing about our little town an' this whole Country, too. No matter what man or woman has done, if they turn their faces ter the front and tries ter keep 'em there, the past is clean forgot, and that is what it ought ter be, fer I reckon we're all of us little ignorant children learnin' by mistakes."

The cow-horse senses anything strange in the brush before his rider sees it, and our horses were pricking their ears forward and stepping high. As we rounded a clump of manzanitas the object of our two days' search stood over a little pool, his broad shoulders and tall, powerful frame reflected in the water. He was talking to his image, and when he heard the thud of hoofs and jingle of bits he straightened up and met our eyes. In his large blue eyes was the mournful look one sees sometimes in the eyes of a dog. He had run away from home, and

for two days and nights had tramped without either rest or food.

His name is Karl Andersen, and he is a hopeless epileptic.

A SKINNER'S DAY

The ten-mule team comes clanking in in the yellow afterglow hauling a heavy wagon bearing a load of ore. They walk fetlock-deep in finest dust that swirls above and around the skinner, and so he rides in a veiling cloud tinged by the evening light. His wagon he leaves beside a car to which its ore is to be transferred, for the only train leaves town at dawn. Then his unhitched mules with chains a-jingle go scuffling wearily through the dust to the big corral on the edge of town.

After the heavy harness is stripped from dusty, sweat-streaked backs, they crowd to the wooden drinking-trough while the skinner apportions to each mule his share of barley and hay. Then gates are clicked, and the tired skinner, after a sousing at the tap, comes to the hotel dining-room, where at a long and narrow table he eats a silent meal. Then a wait in a throng of his desert friends while the mail is handed out, then the news is greedily scanned, then the Imperial Bar Room swallows him. There he finds his night cronies seated about a large round table, gambling absorbedly for small stakes. He joins them and plays until

nine o'clock, when he leaves them for the night. Then up in the morning at four o'clock to get his breakfast in the empty hotel dining-room, collect the mail, look over his wagon for weakened parts, then the mules are hitched, the harness scanned for any worn or weakened spots, then his team rumbles noisily out of town, the jolt of his empty wagon greeting the waking ears of a later riser here and there.

Up through the gently sloping desert plods slowly the panting team, the heavy yellow sand pouring in cascades from the wagon wheels, and then low hills are reached, the road still winding upward along a sandy slope with high, brush-studded waves of sand enfolding it to right and left, and then a tiny cañon engulfs the struggling team, and then a deeper one, its sides of yellow broken porphyry holding no single blade of grass in any of their crevices. Above, it narrows to a deep dark cut of purple granite, black with shadow, verdureless and lifeless, like a picture by Doré. That cut is the lower gateway to a bare and rock-strewn hill hemmed all about with mountain walls, purple, yellow, gray. Still up the road winds, through another gate, this time of hard blue limestone seamed with veins of white, then out through this higher gateway to another bare steep slope, but only bare of rocks, for the joshua-tree, the cactus, and the sage-bush flourish there.

On to this desert pasture open the mouths of draws and cañons that through the countless ages the upper floods have cut. Into the blackest, deepest, coldest of those cañon mouths, the skinner's team has wound, and there, just out of sight around its lower bastion, his blacksnake cracks like a pistol shot, for he is only half way up and his mules are wearying. Six hours to go eight miles, for he is bound for a mine on a steep bare slope lying below the snow, and the skinner walks those miles. With his rawhide hanging over his shoulder, with both hands gathering rocks that he throws at any mule he sees who isn't pulling his pound, the skinner's face is beginning to redden, his language is warming up, for, though the time is but mid-morning, the hot desert sun is chasing the shadows out of the night-cooled cañon, and it tries his temper to see one mule doing the work of two, and it tries it more when a well aimed rock thrown at the ribs of the laggard mate, bounds off with the sound of rock on bone, the mule never even flicking his tail to acknowledge a center shot.

It is almost true, what I've often heard, that you cannot hurt a mule. Rocks and blacksnakes he minds but little, and when he deems that his energies have been used as much as they should, right there he quits till, in his own mind, he is recuperated. Some of us good Americans

with our hustle and rush and overwork would not be demeaning ourselves to learn from the good American mule, for he'll work like—a mule, but will take it slow, without nervous hurry or fuss, and will last twice as long as a powerful horse very much larger than he. No one may fathom the mulish mind, but perchance as he stands, clean limbed and sound, after thirty hard-working years, and sees a worn-out horse go by, his throat-splitting bray is the laugh of contempt the wise has for the fool, for he is as sound as a bell at thirty, that horse broken down at ten. No, maybe one "*can't* kill a damn mule," but the mule has a voice in that, and in that voice he tells himself, "I will save my strength for a future need, for I see hard work ahead."

But the skinner has reached the mine at last, and while his mules with their nose-bags on are swishing their ratty tails, he eats with the miners a hearty dinner in their big boarding-house. The news of the town he brings to them and takes back mining news. Then the sacks of ore are loaded on his heavy, wide-tired wagon, and with a parting adios he starts down the mountain side, while the whine and shriek of brake on tire fills all the cañon bed. He is riding the big nigh wheeler now, one hand holding a thin stout line that runs to the leaders' heads,

the other grasping his brake. Sometimes his wagon bumps off the grade, overturning and dumping out its load of heavy ore sacks that lie scattered about the steep incline; then he must right the upturned wagon, and load it a second time. Sometimes the cañon road's so blocked with snow he cannot get up; then he leaves his wagon stuck in the snow and takes the trail for town, to come back when the road is open. Meanwhile the mules he has taken back are eating their heads off at his expense. Sometimes when struggling up the grade he will see a cloud-burst threatening in the mountains high above; then every living thing must leave the road that follows the cañon bed, for that is the cloud-burst's watercourse. He must unhitch his mules, leave his wagon, and take to the cañon slopes, only to find, when the flood has passed, that his wagon is buried in mud and stones and loaded with boulders from the flood that has rolled over it. And sometimes his brake snaps in a dangerous spot; and then — he curses mules no more.

His face is burned to a bright, brick red, his eyes are crinkled up from squinting into the desert sun, his hair is none too thick, but his mustache makes up for that for he doesn't get time to shave. The tiny cigarette he smokes is buried in its shade. His voice is low and his speech is gentle when he is with his friends.

No fiery words escape his lips, no oaths, nor any violence, save when he's skinning mules. Then he's a raging demon, and the vilest names he flings at them, blood curdling oaths and bitterest curses he hurls at their wagging ears.

The purple wall goes sheerly up till, twenty feet above its base, it overhangs the road, upon whose other side there stands a giant boulder, purple, too, bastioning the narrow road from the deep gorge below. So narrow is that cañon track between that sheer wall and that rock, that wagon hubs will almost graze its sides, and just below that narrow portal the road drops at a dizzy slant, then vanishes around a point. The rocks are purple and the purple dust is deep upon the road. But for a little while at noon, a sword flash drops down from the sun to cut the gloom, then all is purple dark again. There dusk comes quickly in mid-afternoon, and all the nameless terrors of the mountains of the desert seem centred in that spot. It is The Devil's Gate.

The Skinner came bumping down the grade and he was cursing lustily. He had to pass through the Devil's Gate for it lies on the only road between the mines far up the mountain side and the town and station far below, and as he swung around to the Gate, a purple dust cloud billowed ahead, enveloped, and followed him.

while the brake shoes clamping the heavy wheels were whining against the tires. The skinner was riding the big nigh wheeler when his leaders squeezed through the narrow pass and dropped down the purple road below. He was barking curses at the leaders when the overstrained brakes broke and the massive wagon with its heavy load ran on to the wheelers with crushing force, then plowed its way to the very heart of writhing bodies and thrashing legs,— a grim, relentless Juggernaut, till halted in the choked-up way, while the death screams of ten powerful mules cut through the purple gloom.

And then the Gate was very still — the skinner would curse no more.

High up the opposite cañon wall, above the shadowed gorge, a jutting spire of stone stood up. It was the favorite lookout of a big brown hawk who rose with a beat of powerful wings and mounted to the blue, for strange, new sounds assailed his ears from the shadowed road below. Then from the line of blue above, a dusky-plumaged buzzard came floating down the cañon with lazy, but sure, intent to perch upon the eyrie of the hawk. With bright sharp eyes and folded wings he waited, the patience of the ages in his pose.

ASPIRATION

There was no earth, there was no sky, nor any air between ; naught but a swirl of bitter dust that filled the mouth and ears and eyes of the young Desert Rat. Too young he was to read the signs, so a sand-storm in the desert was his fate. Six burros he had started with, six burros he had lost, for they had drifted before the storm and were never seen again. Since their packs held his water and all his grub, his clothes, and his mining tools, a bare human atom he was left in the midst of a howling waste. His eyes were filled with burning sand, but there was naught for eyes to see ; his feet were heavy in yielding sand, but there was nowhere for feet to go ; and his throat, as well as his mouth, was full of the hot and gritty dust, but there was no water to ease his throat if the dust had not been there. First he was gripped with wild despair, then came dull apathy, then a benumbed waking sleep, and after long hours he dropped to his knees and crawled through the sand, with head bowed down like any desert thing.

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Where a moist spot shows in the desert, the
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blowing sand will stick and grow and pile upon itself till a big sand-dune is formed. When the poor blinded, crawling thing met one of those big dunes, with gripping fingers and bleeding knees he crawled through cascades of sliding sand, like a wounded snake, to the top. His tongue was swollen. It filled his mouth and protruded between his lips till he could not even mutter, but he had one conscious thought, "I must keep alive till I reach the top, so they will see my bones, and since I must surely die today, I will die as high as I can."

The fierce storm ended, the wind died down, the shifting, driving sand was still, as though the desert had done its worst and had stopped to catch its breath. And still was the lifeless, crumpled form that lay on that dune of sand. Then the moon peeped over the desert's rim, throwing its clear, soft radiance on cones and ridges and waves of sand, while, but a short stone's throw from that big sand-dune, a desert surveyor's fire winked red beneath the moon.

THE SKINNER

The time is evening, and the hills are blue-black all about. Upon the desert's farther rim, a band of yellow light, and rising from the desert floor, a tiny puffed-up cloud of dust comes rolling ever close. 'Tis nothing but a smoky cloud. There's never a thing in sight, save that ever growing ball of dust, expanding as it nears. Across the road a coyote runs and scuttles into the brush. Even the lizards do not stir, for it is that hour 'twixt day and night when the wind of the desert is still, when the day has ceased to breathe, when night is stretching her arms aloft ere opening starry eyes. The hush of evening settles down, and still that cloud comes on, over the brush and the malapai; across the cracked, dry bed of an ancient lake that ages back had been fed by long dried streams; through deep gullies and over bumps; still keeping the twisting road, till a couple of galloping mules spring out of the rolling yellow cloud, and another pair, and another, until twelve big mules flash by, then the skinner, standing up in his seat and leaning against the lines, while his blacksnake coils and whistles and cracks. For one brief flashing space his face

gleams with wild fury against the dying light — and then he is by and out of sight, and the dust cloud rolls behind.

Then, after a week had gone, I saw him in a hospital.

Ten miles along, after he flashed by, the wagon-tongue broke and he was pulled down off his box and dragged through a big sage-brush that tore his eyes till the lids swelled shut and stripped his hands of flesh to the bone. So he had to drop the lines. He wandered that night and for four long days in a hot and aimless hell, till a Desert Rat discovered him and led him to a town.

He had hauled ore to a distant town, and was bringing back supplies. He left there with two bottles — that were empty when he passed.

And the rest is a story that is told. He will never see again.

ON AND OFF THE TRAIL

CIVILIZATION

We call it the desert, yet it is filled with varied forms of life, life which is throbbing, vital, but no kin to the life exotic to it — that of humanity. The human touch on its edges and in little spots we call oases only intensifies its own independent life and charm and terror, and man recognizes its power when he decrees that any wanderer shall have the right to stop a desert train for water. The human dramas on its borders, which to us loom so big, seem insignificant when we are enveloped in its brooding strength.

The desert dead? Not so — the side-winder stirs beside the sandy track; the road-runners, in pairs, scuttle ahead of my horse, seemingly taking pride in winning a race against him; it is the coyote's home; and the sky is sometimes black with wild ducks who have left the shore of some undrinkable lake. And color, surely, is a part of life. Not twice will the same hues assail the eye. The cactus flower bears the color of the rose. The greasewood and the sage-brush look different, and the color of the

skies at dawn and dusk never seems the same two days together.

The desert whispered to itself before man ever trod it, but now it takes his accent, for beneath a leaning sign-post at the end of an old worn track, lie the bleaching bones of a horse, and far along on the selfsame trail is an empty whiskey bottle. Poor weapon with which to fight you, Desert!

And you have your own forms of tiny insect life that burrow in your sands, and you are framed in wild and savage beauty, for where the winter snows of the Sierras are poured upon your glittering yellow bosom, the creeks that carry those clear icy waters are banked with cottonwoods and tall green grasses, while on your other side lie other mountains, stern and cold and dead, that hold the treasures of a thousand cities within their gloomy cañons. The tiny holes and puny tracks that man has made upon those mighty ridges are but as ants' work in a dusty road, and in the space of one man's little life the monuments to human evolution of brain and high endeavor will all be gently, surely, wiped away. This is not done by you in savage anger, but slowly and inexorably, yet surely as the drifting of your sands — and yet not quite.

There is one trivial thing outlasts man's nobler monuments; a thing of interest to the

burro's eye, a keen reminder of some vanished camp, a symbol of man's economic art, perchance the savior of some desert wanderer's life — an old tomato can!

DAWN

The cold, stark body of those grim, bleak mountains shows gray and brown against a clear blue sky; by day, its dazzling blue a menace in its sameness, but when the night has blown its candles out, when against a sky of purple and of gray, huge rosy clouds are pil-lowed above the taller buttes, whose topmost edges only are tipped with purest gold, then those mountains show no longer grim and bleak, but soft with velvet shadows, blue-black shading into green. The broad, flat desert, miles below, is still in dusky shadow, save where the sun is climbing over a saddle further down, sending one long, golden lance quivering across its gray-ness. Beyond that lower desert, the ramparts of the gray Sierras rise, their snowy peaks bathed all in rosy light, while yet all's dusk below.

The sounds of night have fled, the coyote is asleep, while day still lingers o'er the rosy images of sweet, unfinished dreams, and for a precious moment the whole wide world is still. The hush, the silence, the suspended life of a primeval world hold for a single breath, while

birth, creation, all life's purest forms are blossoming anew as in the earth's first dawn.

There is a bit of cotton rope holds back my cabin door, its end frayed out. A tiny humming-bird, bearing the hues of midnight and the dawn, of high noon and of dusk, upon his brilliant iridescent body, poises in the first bright shaft of level sun from over the lowest peak, and darts his sharp bill into that frayed out floss, gathering down to remake last night's bed.

And then I know 'tis day.

COMPENSATION

There is a grim gray rampart that I know, its jagged ridge sharp cut against the sky, while over all its mighty height and breadth, broods stark, dead desolation. From miles away it gazes over lower peaks upon the yellow, hot, and dusty desert that seems, by contrast, teeming with quick life. No eagle wheels above that steep, gray wall, nor hawk nor buzzard circles in the blue. No earth, no weed, nor any desert growth finds lodgment in a crevice of its rock. Even the lizard shuns its steep, bare slope. The coyote circles round with slinking glance, nor breaks its deathlike silence with his multi-echoing bark. It holds not even life enough to please a hermit ghost.

And yet, when day is fading, and it stands out purple-black against the rosy clouds of dusk, it holds a certain beauty in its gloomy loneliness. Then, when the evening has closed in and velvet night comes forth, it towers a weird and mighty shape against the paler sky. And in the stillest watches of the night, when all wild nature's throbbing in its sleep, the frosty, glittering stars stoop low to kiss its

stony brow, for, though its foot is covered deep
in sharp edged shifting shale, its lofty head
rears proudly up to mingle with the brilliant
spheres that lower mountains may not reach —
and mocks at desolation.

A DESERT GARDEN

There is a tiny cañon in the desert mountains that opens out above on to a rock-strewn treeless slope. Its sides are bare and rocky, with here and there a sage-bush or a dying joshua-tree, but in the narrow tunnel of that cañon bed, a veritable garden blooms, for the sunlight shines there ever since it opens to the west.

They are not giant growths, so there is more room in which to crowd the flora of the desert, and in that narrow space is all the story of a desert life. Struggling up through beds of thin, sharp, slaty shale that tinkles with the sound of broken glass when trod upon, there sprouts the pale geranium, its brilliant scarlet faded to a paler red in the fierce desert sun. There sprouts the desert holly, too, with leaves of frosty, pale gray-green and berries like pallid strawberries, not glowing with the brilliant red of colder eastern climes. There is the desert palm — the joshua-tree, with lance-like spines and stunted trunk that in the dusk a desert horse will look at twice, so much it seems a silent, watching guard, a desert sentinel. The gnarled and sturdy piñon pine is there, its

twisted trunk and writhing arms seeming to tell a tale of stress and storm and agony, and yet that cannot be since it was born misshapen, and the fiercely sweeping desert winds had naught to do with its deformities, for close beside it stands a straight-stemmed, long-leaved pine, full grown, but only sapling high, whose slender straightness and whose graceful branching those winds have failed to mar. There grows the mountain mahogany with its rich wine-red heart. And under foot, round cactus balls looking like porcupines on guard, their lovely delicate pink blooms rivaling the rose. There, too, the greasewood flourishes, man-high, with feathery foliage of a cedar green, whose branches furnish fuel for the desert bred, and hiss and sputter like burning grease when they are set aflame. There are tiny tufts of bunch-grass and high clumps of desert weeds.

And there's the sage, the noble desert sage of purple, green, and gray. Where water comes seldom, or never, it sturdily flings its branches out, and is as much of the desert a part, as its sun, or its sands, or its burned-out rock. At dawn the bronco's parched throat is wet by the moisture that stands on its pale green leaves; at evening its branches help to heat his rider's bacon and sour dough, and, standing as high as a mounted man, it will afford life-giving shade where other shade is none. But more than that, the sage does double service to

the eye, for it breaks the stretch of blazing light with darker spots of a restful hue, and when the sun is sinking beneath the desert's far, straight rim, sending long shafts of mellow fire to touch the rounded bodies of the sage with the light of pure enchantment, it is then they glow like balls of sunny light above the darkening desert floor that already has grown shadowed, for in that eerie, brooding hush the burning blaze of day relents and sends forth farewell glances of softest, kindly gold. Brave growth that looks the fierce sun in the eye and stands up proudly where all else would perish or live a meager, cowering life beneath his burning glance!

But that's in the flat desert. In my cañon garden the sage communes with goodly company, and holds high wassail when the winter rains pour rushing torrents down the cañon beds. For the Desert Gardener lets his garden go a long, long time unwatered, then, like a boy with a new watering-can, He'll sometimes drown His thirsty garden out.

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The lizards flash in that garden green and gray — that buried garden, that sunken garden, all walled about with high bare slopes — and the sun is hot, though the air is soft and very, very still. There are no birds in that

garden, though the hawk and his buzzard cousin fix their bright eyes upon it from the blue sky above. Even the insects dwell not there; no busy whirr is ever heard, no cheerful hum, no chirr, nor scrape of wing.

But every spot upon this earth holds some especial gift, and in my desert garden there dwells, not deathlike stillness, but the stillness of a world unborn. There dwells profoundest peace.

SURVIVAL OF THE UNFIT

Man has come and man has gone and he has left this land more desolate than when God made it at the first. A shaly road winds into the brooding shadows of a deep-cleft cañon. As nature fashioned it, it would be grim, but man has made it tragic, for upon one side of that rough trail an old adobe arrastre still prevails o'er desert sun and fierce cloudburst and swift and sudden slides of rock from the steep walls above. Across from the old arrastre, perched upon its little dump, stands a miner's roofless hut of stone, brush covering the floor. Still farther on, is a wide, deep hole, its nearer edge brushing the very trail — that hole was dug to drink from, and beneath its shallow depth of poison water lies a human skeleton. Then out through the cañon's upper end, spreads a brushy, rock-strewn flat where only an old slag dump betrays the life of a former day. The flat backs up against a steep gray wall, two tunnel mouths like eye sockets glaring from out its face of rough, gray stone. Nature, where man has never pitched his tent, is wild and awesome, sometimes grim and cruel, and sometimes sad and tragic, but there is no

sadness in her face, there is no tragedy like to that she shows on her broad countenance where man has struggled and failed and died, leaving his puny monuments behind.

Then, leaving that gray, steep slope behind and taking the cañon road down to the flat, one reads a different chapter in man's book of past endeavor, for here, no rough and dangerous steeps, but beneath a burning sun a rough road deep in sand that runs through little desert towns and out across wide sandy wastes. At one point on its way this road says Howdy to a big stone house, adjoining it, a large stone-walled corral. Before the house, an old well-hole, now half choked up and dry as desert dust. The ruined road house, the long corral wall are built of black volcanic rock, the burned-out malapai flung on the desert floor, long ages gone, by some then active crater miles away. Close to that ruined road house, silent now, where thirty years ago a hundred horses milled in its corral, there is a small round knoll, a little island in the desert sea, covered with sage-brush, with one big flat stone, a deep hole in its center where the squaws were wont for ages past to grind their meal, using a smooth and oblong stone for pestle, and, indeed, they camp there yet, whenever their wandering fortunes bring them near.

If man's struggles and ruined monuments do

bring but sadness to wild nature's face, his top-most art in dress grafted upon her rough-clothed native race were enough to make her rugged face crack into a grim smile. I was lost one day in a wild and gloomy cañon lighted by sunshine only at high noon. 'Twas here, thought I, the very earth was made rough hewn, nor has been ever polished since, when looking up its bed I saw three Indians riding down. The rear was brought up by a half grown boy. In the center rode a fat, old squaw dressed in a bright print gown, while in the lead, a small, old Indian, his deep brown leathery face, wrinkled and cross-wrinkled by age and dazzling sun, beamed genially at me from beneath the brim of a high-crowned old plug hat which he wore with conscious pride and dignity as though it were fitter than his old war-bonnet.

IGNORANCE

Far in the desert shines a golden glory. On one side, looking close, but miles from it, rise lofty mountains, gray, implacable, and bare unto their summits, save for snow that caps them ever, and on beyond that misty sun-shot nimbus, the desert, silent, brush-strewn, vast.

Across the desert from those gray rock walls, but at its upper end, far from that golden glory, rise other mountains, copper-purple, black, slashed with deep cañons widening to a flat that slopes to the desert bed. The only roads into those black, rough hills run up the cañon slashes. My old cow-pony picks his careful way down this kind nature's roadway, for even in the desert is she kind, at times, if one but give her smile for smile. *Her* smile is always brilliant. When the cañon walls fan out to left and right, giving a wide look down that sandy waste, my golden glory's there. "Tis not the sun gilding a certain spot through rifted, purple clouds. It looks to my pleased eyes more like a sunny fire, its licking flames softened by mists of distance to one bright golden glow, a delicate mist like sun smoke all around it. The rocks about are somber, the sky is gray or pur-

ple-dark — yet there it shines, my fairy fire.

I do not know what causes it — I do not want to know. The names of flowers give no added pleasure in their beauty, nor *why* they grow, nor *how*, could add to my delight. I am quite sure that science could not aid me with a long, learned explanation of it, and if it could I should not thank it much, for as it is I love that fairy fire, a sunny spot in a wide burned-up flat. It glows less golden in the golden sun, just as a bonfire pales at broad midday. So when I ride out from the cañon's shadow and see that sun-dust in a blank, still world, my spirit lifts, my pony pricks his ears and steps more lightly. The very smell of sand he loves, of course, yet I know not but he has had instilled into his wise old head some of his master's fancy.

There are some men who will account for almost everything upon this big, strange earth. But did you ever think how dreadful it would be to know it all? To trace earth's mighty layers, through all the countless ages, to her very heart? To hear the tongue of prehistoric man, or, possibly, his jabber? Or yet, still further back, to know and see reptilian life acrawl in fetid slime? Or, pray, would you wish to see and know those creatures back at the beginning when this world was formed from — what? When all's explained and all's experienced, life is a finished book, no romance left, delight, nor

hidden joy. No, give me my sunny fire in the desert, nor tell me whence it came. Oh, Thou Great Universe, I beg of Thee, yield not too many secrets unto me, nor make me overwise, for then should I be sad forevermore.

PATIENCE

A wide and lonely flat that to the eye looks limitless. Though to that eye it seems to stretch unbroken to the line where earth meets heaven, yet is it seamed and gashed with fluted hollows, draws, arroyos, hid from the glance that cuts across their edges to the clear horizon far away, as a pebble skips the crests of dancing waves, nor takes account of wave-troughs in between. The western sky is filled with rosy clouds merged to a flaming yellow where it meets the distant earth, that shows up black and sinister against that yellow glow. No hills loom up athwart that far, free view; no water's there; no growth of grass, no tree; nothing but earth and sky and stilly promise of the coming night. Over the sage-brush, greasewood, cactus spires, there hangs the last light of the dying sun, transparent, tarnished gold. On the black earth, that water's vital kiss would cause to blush and blossom into beauty, crawls the snake, while up from the nearest ridgy hollow, out on to the flat, a big, lean steer with drooping head weaves slowly, painfully, while on his sunken, bony back a buzzard calmly rides.

Days ere the cattleman's keen eye had known

his animal was doomed, the buzzard's instinct sensed the truth; thereafter left him never, but, perched upon the steer's ridged spine or on a jutting, bony hip, with folded wings is waiting. The dying beast, too sick to heed, too weak to make protest, finally stumbles to his knees, then plows the black earth with his nose, and with a low moan settles down to lie supine, but with erected horns. The buzzard, biding his time to strike, moves forward, perching carefully upon one long sharp horn. Then from the sky, now turned to palest green, comes circling down from some mysterious height the big bird's mate, lighting with swift, sure drop upon the other horn.

No move they make. With folded wings at rest they watch the big, gaunt steer breathe out his life, but perched upon his wide-spread curving horns, they're waiting, waiting, waiting.

THROUGH A WINDOW

From the high peaks the soft white flakes are driving, and though I am standing ankle-deep in snow, from far below smiles up at me the silent, yellow desert, shining with alluring golden light, and ringed about my darkly storming mountains, it lies, a sunny circle, on its flat floor far below, as the sun shines through a knot-hole in a darkened room and paints a golden disk upon its shadowed floor. It is like looking from the outer cold and darkness through a window into warmth and cheery light.

And though it beckons warmly with its still and distance radiance, holding out fair promise and vivid, bright allure, like many a golden vision, looking lovely from far heights, when I draw near with out-stretched hand, it scorches, burns, and sears.

VARIETY

Old Nature is a conjuror and delights in playing tricks. She loves to bring out colors that we didn't know she had, like a mother drawing treasure from an unguessed secret pocket to delight her children's eyes.

There is a red, red road I know that runs between tall, close grown pines, their dark green boughs its canopy. When I emerge at sunset from that cool and fragrant tunnel, its floor slashed with long bars of sunny light, I know not what the distant view will give, for it is ever new. I have seen from near that tunnel's mouth the distant mountains all a mass of golden rose, no hint of colors of an hour gone; and I have seen those hills a mass of varied shades, from deepest green of nearest crests, to purple, blue, then blue-gray, till the country over there is melted with the sky; and then, again, it is a sea of sage-green billows, with red and yellow gashes running from their topmost crests, a brilliant sky above; and yet again, ridge after ridge of those same hills is buried clean in snowy white, a cold blue flawless sky above. I never know how those far hills will greet me, nor what appeal their changeful moods may make.

The desert, too, with its cyclopean mountains is wrapped at dawn and evening in soft veils of mystery. Those jagged peaks and ridges that in the clear, hot light of desert day are sternly stamped against a burning sky, at dawn are changed to misty, gracious lines of purple beauty edged with rose, and then they seem to hold an unnamable promise and a bright allure. At dusk they show blue-black with a still air of brooding mystery. Their lines are softened, as at dawn, but now they loom as somber shadows of the great unknown, nor do they urge and beckon as in the waking day.

And there is a desert Will-o'-the-Wisp that flashes in the pearl-gray dawn and in the velvet blackness of the night, upon the desert floor. It is the light of Ah Hee's fire, that cooks us at dawn the far-brought and often the far-flung egg, and at evening the "T bone" steak,

FRIENDS OF MINE

THE FORTY-NINESS

Hemming the desert on the west there rises a huge rampart, gray and cold, that hides from desert eyes the gentler, grassy, tree-clad hills where the placer country lies. And to that placer country came the Argonauts in 1849.

She was tall for a girl and, though slender, gave promise of future roundness. Her mouth was rather wide and humorous, her color brilliant, her hair blue-black, and her eyes were violet, but laughing. I don't know why, but I always associate violet eyes with seriousness. Hers, however, were like violets that held the reflected sunlight of the sky above them. And then she had dimples. I mention them because, perhaps, they helped her through it all. And I mention her first because she counted—and counts—the most, but there was, also, her husband. She was only eighteen and he was three years older—the correct Victorian ages for marrying, I believe, though they had been married a year. He was a nice boy with kind, brown eyes, and just after the '49 excitement he went West and she would not be left behind. They both hailed from a birthplace of sailors, therefore it was a trip around Cape Horn

and so up the western coast to the Golden Gate and then, as quickly as could be, to the nearest land of promise.

That nearest land of promise was a pine clad mountain land where the snow lay deep in the winter, where the gulches roared with the rains, yet over the lofty mountains to the east there lay a hot and glittering yellow waste where all the gold was sand. No eastern miners came there until later to search its bordering hills for gold, for it looked, and was, a grim, forbidding land.

She lived in a canvas house, this gently bred eastern girl. She could see the tarantulas crawling on the walls, she learned to keep a sharp eye abroad for rattlers, she found that the Digger Indians were cowards, for she drove away twenty of them with an empty forty-five, and in that little canvas shack she gave birth to her two girls, with no woman near, no doctor. There were floods one winter in that valley where her big brown-eyed hunter sluiced the golden sands, and he rescued a Chinaman from being swept away, one day, but the drenching he got killed him — the Chinaman survived.

So Sally Everett was left in a narrow gulch beside a rapid mountain river, where the sloping cañon walls ran steeply up, where the shadows left late in the day and came back again early. There was a little flat beside the stream where

her small canvas house stood with some others — and that was all. No, not quite all, for mountain lions and wildcats came to the edge of the timber, deer and bears sometimes crossed the flat, the birds sang at her, the little singing stream made music, and she had the worshipful devotion of every man in camp, and while dress was rough and life simple, the earliest camps brought into their circle the brains, the education, and the fine manliness of their day.

But the two little girls were growing bigger and so she must go back — across the Isthmus this time — for school is the rod of a tyrant to a dutiful mother. Whither that beckons she must follow. When she reached home, the little buck-skin sack, filled with gold-dust when she left the camp, was almost empty of the coins for which she had exchanged it. Her family was poor. She would not be a burden to them, and those little mouths must be fed, so she went to work. A second time she loved and married, and then her young soldier husband answered that first stern call for volunteers in the days of '61, even as the other had responded to the mad call of gold. So he went, and had his fortunes all to make when he came back. Then followed years of pinching and privation, and other children came to be a worry and a comfort, also a generous spur to new endeavor. Her brood grew up and scattered to the four corners of this

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stronger, greater America. To the scenes of her early life of hardship one son has returned, equipped with all the knowledge that modern science gives, with machinery and money to trace the source of that old golden flood. His wife he leaves behind, for despite the sixty odd years gone, the living's still too primitive, the country is too rough.

When Sally Everett speaks of '49 there's a sparkle in her bright old eyes: and when she hears the martial music of the tense days of '61 the color flames in her still smooth cheeks and those violet eyes are suffused with unshed tears. The strong and valiant spirit of the Forty-niner's wife still looks from her eyes — and life is good and there remains much gold to find. And so she smiles. For she still has those dimples.

A MISSOURI MEERSCHAUM

I sing not the song of the cigarette nor the fragrant Cuban leaf, but the song of the Missouri Meerschaum,— the good old corn-cob pipe.

In a land where distance is measured by the time it takes to consume “six cigareets an’ a couple o’ quids,” tobacco is surely King. If the cigarette is the populace, the cigar the haute noblesse, then the old Missouri Meerschaum is guide, counselor, and friend. Its long thin stem tells a dreamy tale of brooding, reedy marshes where wide sheets of quiet water lie in unruffled sleep, and its bowl recalls fair memories of the land where the sweet corn grows.

The cigarette is a dainty thing, but it reaches and twists the nerves ; the cigar is a delicate luxury that doesn’t grow in the wilds ; and the quid — well, as Lincoln said on a time when speaking of something else, “For people who like that sort of a thing, that’s the sort of thing they’d like.” Though I know many men enjoy the quid, and some of my good friends chew, yet I’m sure that the quid doesn’t comfort them as my warm old friend does me. I tell it my troubles and my joys, it stays with me day and night,

and the visions I see in its curling smoke are good and passing fair, and I am the peer of any one when talking to my pipe.

With many strange moods it has sympathized, it has steadied me, betimes, and has burned itself to its very heart to give me of its best, and every time that my mood lights up, it responds with a steady glow, burning fragrant incense to its loyalty to me, not with the scented, dizzying black perique from the Orient, nor yet the leaf from Connecticut, nor that from the Philippine Islands, but with the fragrant steadiness of good Virginia plug.

When the night shuts down, when shades are drawn and the lamp of evening lit, thoughts kindly, weird, elusive, bright, arise with the curling smoke, and in its blue wreaths crystallize the ideas born of day. A non-smoker has prophesied that in some awful years, a smoker will be a Pariah, a hermit shunned and scorned and forced to live far from his kind, whom the fumes of his pipe can never reach. Now be that day far distant, long after *my* day is sped, though I know a place far, far from men in a clean and empty desert land, where with my corn-cob pipe alight and atop a lonely mountain peak, I may play volcano to desire's topmost bent.

When, after my life's day has closed, I go still further up, I pray I may be segregated on some lonely cloud and permitted to smoke my pipe in

peace, so that I promise solemnly to let no blue smoke cloud approach the ladies' filmy draperies upon adjoining clouds. But if, alas! my future life is planned for down below, the tobacco there would be too dry to smoke with any zest, and then, besides and even worse, the fumes of sulphur always spoil the flavor of a pipe. That *would* be Hell.

PINON

He was one of Nevada's Native Sons. His sire was as black as night and large for a desert horse, and his proud neck had never been caught in the cowboy's circling rope. His mother was a blooded bay, and brought to his fiery desert blood the breeding of the East. She had been lured away from a rancher's field by that lordly desert chief, and no art could tole her home again, for the Arab in her blood responded to the desert's call — and she knew the ways of men. And so when the herd went into the hills when the grass began to spring, her colt was born upon a flat and grassy mountain bench, and not in the sheltered stable where she had spent her youth.

And so he ran with his mother, and so he grew in strength. He learned to step over shelving rock without slipping a quarter inch, he learned to avoid the poison springs, and where sweet water ran, and he learned to drink all he could hold when he came to a water hole. He learned to run from a loud sharp sound that came from the back of a distant horse who would not join his herd, for following one such loud report he saw a playfellow stumble, fall, and never rise

again. He learned to swerve from a rattler's coil as swift as a flash of light, but most of all, he learned to flee from a strange shape with a rope that followed him fast and followed him far, and though ever he got away, from behind some boulder or rocky bend it would suddenly dash again, until one hot and fateful day, far from his usual range, a cool, dark cañon drew him on until he found himself in a box, all smooth, sheer walls ahead. Then turning around with a startled snort, sensing his human foe, he looked down the steep-walled cañon bed up which he had lightly stepped, and saw three shapes against the light, and each shape had a rope. His satin skin was quivering and his nostrils panting wide, but he stood backed up against the wall and glared with laid back ears.

Three circling swift ropes caught him, and then he reared with an angry scream, and then he went to his knees — another young, wild, free thing was caught to be the slave of man. But I wonder if he counted and treasured up his revenge? For before he could be trusted, he had killed exactly three of those hated shapes with long coiled ropes who had ridden him at the first.

He was not very large, nor very small, but would dance with two hundred pounds, with a big, round barrel and short, flat back and a tail that swept the ground, and his color between the

black and red of his sire and his dam. His flat knees tapered to rounded hoofs, but his beauty was his head; wide, showing brain, between the eyes, with little pointed ears that never in all his life laid flat after he'd killed those three, and a large, full sparkling eye that would see a fly light on his back as quick as it would the road ahead.

He had ridden range in Nevada one hundred miles to the day; he had trailed a lady's skirts on his back and carried her safe and well; he had been a desert packer's mount and captained a string of mules; he had snaked mine timbers where wheels could not go, and worked on a miner's whim; yet today, at the age of twenty-five, he will climb in one hour a steep rough trail that another horse climbs in two. A bronco is not a jumping horse — from his sires he may have learned that landing all fours on a heap of rocks is not good for the desert-bred. So he slides down the side of a gully, or wash, and climbs up the further side, or takes one long, slow step across, if the gully be not too wide; but when Piñon comes to a gully he clears it, light as a bird, and shakes his handsome head when he alights, as I've seen a hunter do.

Now here is the strangest thing of all when you recall his youth, for when you head him for the herd, his tail plumes out and his head goes up and his ears point straight ahead, his

eyes are bright and he wheels like light, and
works without rein or spur; for the keenest joy
in life he knows is when he bears you upon his
back to help you corral his kind.

FOR SHERIFF

The summer was at its height. The primaries were to be held the latter part of August and the fight for the election of a new sheriff was waxing hot. From a monetary standpoint it was the most desirable elective office to be contested, since the salary was big for the desert, the perquisites considerable, the work light, as the country was at peace. Only once in a great while was the sheriff called upon to chase a horse thief, his duties being largely those of an undertaker presiding over the funeral obsequies of defunct mines; but when he *was* called upon to fulfil the strenuous duties of his office, the trail would take him over wild and gloomy spaces and sometimes across the deserts of another state. But this was seldom.

In the space of a few short days I was more visited by would-be county officials than in years before. Down the desert they rode from the county town, up through the rough, wild country bordering those level sands, scouring the flats, the cañons, the ridges to find, interview, persuade, the desert rancher and the lone miner, a visit to whose shacks might entail a deviation of many miles from the main traveled road, for

in this desert land every vote would count. They visited every big and little mine in the hope of swaying the boss by specious promises, and his men by genial talk and big cigars. My own little mine was high on a steep, rocky slope, miles above the desert, but there I met them all. Ranchers and miners they were, some of them men who had held petty office, and they mounted the steep and winding cañon road to the ledge where the office and bunkhouse stood, their lean and rangy desert horses hardly puffing after the eight mile uphill climb.

The first to honor me was Jim Lorgan. His lips dripped civic virtue, but his mustache was long and drooping, the kind that seems to suggest an alcohol-dipped brush. After proffering the inevitable, the electoral cigar, Jim held forth upon the subject of his visit.

"I'm a runnin' fer sheriff o' this here county, an' there's five o' us in the race, so it'll be some fight, fer bootleggin' is goin' ter be a strong issue. Now, I ain't aimin' ter say nothin' agin any other candidate, fer that ain't the way ter win, by knockin' the other feller, an' I don't intend ter bring no personal things into this here campaign. Shelton Corliss, him as is Sheriff now, is in the race agin, he's one o' us five. *I* ain't got nothin' agin' Shelton. He's a pretty good feller, though some *do* say that he'd orter had Tom Halliday arrested fer bootleggin', even

if Tom *did* marry Corliss's sister, fer everybody knows that you could go into Tom's Hotel on the aidge o' the desert at Sandyville and get a shot o' hooch any time, an' Corliss's brother helpin' Tom about the Hotel as handy man, with a whiskey nose on him the color o' a desert geranium. But, as I say, Shelton's all right, an' I ain't agoin' ter knock. I believe in livin' by the law, an' I'm goin' ter enforce it if I'm 'lected."

After much more of the same in praise of the other four, Lorgan left. Corliss must have been on his trail for it was only a couple of hours later that the Sheriff turned into my mine trail. Six feet four he stood, and all in proportion to his inches, with a massive featured face smooth shaven, a wide brimmed pearl-gray Stetson shading his big close-cropped head, coatless, his vest hanging open, and blue-overalled.

"I haven't met you, but I heard o' you, and I've come ter ask you ter vote for my reelection at the primaries. I'm aimin' ter keep personalities out o' my fight for Sheriff. Course, I know I got enemies, but I don't want ter get elected again by throwin' any slurs at anybody. But, now, there's Jim Lorgan. He was my deputy for awhile, and now he's runnin' against me. Jim's not such a bad feller, but in this dry district, Jim run a bootleg joint when he was

deputy sheriff, and they do say that he punishes a good deal of his own bootleg."

While I had him there, I meant to find out the story from his own lips, a story reciting that Corliss had taken advantage of his position as sheriff to assault outrageously a local store-keeper about half his size.

"It ain't any such thing as that report says, fer Bill Robinson and I have always been good friends. We was doin' some business together and there was some dispute between us about the money settlement o' that same business. I was in Bill's one day, when he got some abusive, claimin' I hadn't handed over all the cash due him on the deal. I wasn't sayin' much, when Bill come up close ter me, still talkin' wild, and actin' like he was goin' ter land on me. It was in his store, and we was both in back near the safe, and I just put up my hand — it was flat open — and pushed his face away. I was some surprised when he went down all in a heap, and I ain't seen him since. I heard that he was in bed four days, and went around his store with his head all bandaged up fer two weeks, but I don't see how one push could 'adone that. And I don't most usually carry any gun, neither, and hadn't one on then.

"Now, this question o' bootleggin' is a big issue in this campaign, and if I'm elected, I intend ter enforce the law, as I have been doin', no

matter *who* is guilty. Yes, even if it was my own brother doin' it, I'd haul him over the coals."

He left, riding on to a bigger camp beyond, and the next morning, Sam Applegate said, "Howdy," tied his horse to a ring set in the corner of my bunkhouse, seated himself on the long bench before the door, and opened fire.

"Reckon you've been pestered some these days by want-to-be sheriffs? Well, here's another one. I ain't never done nothin' in politics, me bein' a rancher, but I hold that it's a office that hadn't orter *have* nothin' to do with politics, an' this bootleggin's got ter stop. There's a lot o' talk goin' back and forth among the candidates, some knockin', I tell *you*, but I ain't indulgin' in none. Shelton Corliss is a good feller, but he's held the job three terms, and that orter be enough, besides, though I won't *say* his brother's a bootlegger, he hangs 'round awful close ter a feller what is, helps him in fact. Don't you guess the sheriff is onto that? You betcher! Jim Lorgan, now, he's all right, but he don't make no bones about biddin' for the bootleg vote, an' them bootleggers knows they can keep up their trade if *he* gits in — Jim's a good feller, though — but I ain't tyin' myself up by beggin' them cusses ter vote fer me. No, Sir —"

His talk was interrupted by the sight of a new arrival, riding along the ore road towards

the bunkhouse, and there was a stiff, strained silence as the newcomer alighted. Applegate reckoned he'd be "pullin' his freight," as he had a long ride ahead of him, but he'd see me again on his way back.

The new arrival was short and stout, and wore canvas leggings over good store trousers. He was spectacled and his head showed slightly bald when he took off his stiff straw hat to mop his forehead.

"Whew, that's some climb! My name's Hiram Brown, and I'm running for sheriff against this bunch of Desert Rats. It's a business proposition and should be handled in a business way. There should be no mutual recriminations in a political campaign. Bootlegging in this county has become a curse and I pledge my word to put it out of business if you give me your vote at the primaries, and I'm elected. My opponents don't like me because they know I know 'em," and his small black eyes, pinched curved nose, and hard mouth gave him the look of a bird of prey as he got out this speech.

I had heard of Hi Brown. He owned stores in different towns in the county and he used indecent haste and took much pleasure in annexing claims and ranches for any little bill that could not be paid on the dot. The reason for such failure to pay mattered not to Hiram. I

happened to know that he sold certain liquids and fiery extracts in large quantities to known bootleggers on the quiet, nor was he over curious about the reason for such large purchases of those fiery liquids so long as he got a stiff cash price for them. In a "dry" country, a conscientious storekeeper refuses to sell such supplies when he has reason to suspect that they are being put to illicit use. Hiram left as briskly as he came, saying as he got quickly into his saddle,

"I'll hope for your vote at the primaries, Sir. This county needs to be cleaned up and I have certain means that I can bring to bear to run it right."

He climbed to his saddle as he'd climb a tree, nor mounted with the cowboy's easy swing, then rode on like a sack of meal, but busily.

The fifth aspirant was yet to call on me, and I looked for his coming with interest for I'd heard much of him. Next morning, when the desert lay below all bathed in early sunshine, when the purple cañon shadows were changing to their daytime hues of gray-green brush and brownish porphyry, a big, but dainty stepping desert horse turned from the wagon road into the trail that led up to my shack, where he halted dead at a gentle pull on the heavy Spanish bit. His rider dismounted with a swing that was all spring and strength. Pulling the reins

over his horse's head, he tied him to the ground, then paused for a moment beside him to stroke the powerful, arching neck, to stroke the forehead between two eyes that were wide and full and bright. After a final pat and a low-toned word, he turned with his hand outstretched. A tall, lean frame that showed strength and grace was his, and a lean, tanned face, gray eyes that held a whimsical light, a good square chin, and a laughing mouth that was swept by a light mustache. He was clad in conventional desert dress: blue overalls over heavy boots high heeled and heavily spurred and an open throated flannel shirt beneath an unbuttoned vest. Those vests! They are always open, but worn on the hottest days, and are as much of a horseman's dress in the desert as his hat. They hold his cigaret papers, his matches, tobacco, pipe, and perhaps that's why they are so loved.

"Howdy, Friend," he drawled to me, in a pleasant boyish voice. "I reckon you're filled up with sheriffs, but I'm out to play the game with the rest. My name is Archie Hamilton, an' my friends just *made* me run. I never ain't did no politics, but I reckon I could try, an' I know the country from A to Z, an' all the bad hombres, too." Then with a whimsical smile he added, as he looked at me. "Maybe *that* ain't no recommend."

"They're makin' bootleg the slogan, an' o'

course that there's O. K., but Hell! we've all made it or drunk the stuff or winked at them as did, an' I been no better than all the rest, but, friend, I'll tell you this," and his laughing eyes were serious now, with a deep and earnest glow, "I got a young wife an' a little kid, an' I promised Jean when I married her that I would cut out the booze, an' I ain't had a shot o' hooch since then, though I was a Hellion once. You don't know me, so I tell you this to let you know that what I promise, I aim to do, an' if I am elected to this here job an' take the oath as sheriff — well, I ain't never broke my word."

He didn't offer me a cigar — for that he had my silent thanks — but sat on the bench beside my door, looking musingly down over cañon walls to the yellow desert far below.

"Say, Pard, you're clost to Heaven here. Ain't this one o' God's own days!" Then with a self-amused chuckle at his own seriousness, "My rivals all got the start o' me an' I got a great big job ahead, so I reckon I'll hit the trail. I hope our trails will cross in town, an' whether I'm sheriff or punchin' cows, I'll sure be glad to see you there."

With a firm handclasp and adios he was in his saddle and up the trail, riding along at a shuffling jog, rolling a cigareet.

And I knew where *my* vote would go.

THAT COUNTRY OVER THERE

A mauve colored burro in a purple cañon whose steep wall spires are tipped with fire, piercing the pearl and gray of dawn. The burro was driven up the cañon road by a man not old, but bent, yet his step was springy, his air was free, and his glance was searching, keen, from a pair of steady, clear gray eyes that noted everything. His overalls were blue canvas, light blue his summer shirt, and he fitted into the landscape as much as the joshua-trees, even his light gray Stetson lent a harmonious note. His burro was laden with two months' grub and cooking and mining tools. He had but a dollar to his name, but that was more than he could use, for he was bound for a place where the coin of man will not buy anything. He was somewhat of a carpenter, and a blacksmith for all his needs, and he carried spare shoes for his burro, which he knew how to fix himself, a cook was he of the very best, and a pretty good laundryman, a seamster, too, though his sewing ran more to strength than delicacy. In the dark of the morning, at three o'clock, at the town on the desert's edge, he had

eaten his bacon and sour dough, for he must be up in the hills before the desert wakes to heat.

Of all the men our country breeds, the prospector is best trained for domestic life, yet the thing which forced that training is the thing which makes him homeless — the thought that he'll yet make his stake in that country over there. Then the lure of the desert gets into his blood and the waste places swallow him.

There's a little town of a hundred souls set down in a sandy flat, its houses little plain board shacks, with a small hotel and a big freight shed and a gambling hall, of course. And that is all, for the sandy wastes hem it in on every side, with ramparts of barren hills beyond, their high buttes topped with snow. When the stark and deadly loneliness gets on their burning nerves, they have sweet dreams, these wanderers, of trees and gurgling brooks. Then they hie them forth to greener scenes, and leave the little town, saying they've had enough of it and are never coming back, yet they come and come and come again. "The desert's got 'em," is what we say, yet one cannot define its charm. There it lies sleeping its hot, still sleep, but very much alive.

Love of gold? 'Tis the joy of finding it and of seeing a camp of thousands grow where he first struck his pick, for the prospector is really

a pioneer. He takes the trail ahead of the great army of enterprise that will follow later on, and, like all army skirmishers, he draws no general's pay. And the glory when he strikes it rich in some wild, unheard-of spot! To pass through a crowded, big saloon, and at tables and at the bar to have men nod at him and say, "There goes the feller that made the strike that started the town o' Golden Spur." And it worries him not and he does not care—he feels, rather, a prideful glow—if in that same room, a few years later, he hears men whisper between their drinks, "There goes that feller that sold his claims in Golden Spur for a cool half million cash. He made things hum and in just two years he'd blown every damn cent in."

But now he tramps up the cañon road, on into the purple gloom. His heart and his feet and his purse are light, though he has ahead of him a journey that would daunt the heart of the stoutest city man, for if he grow ill or break a bone, he'll be thirty miles from aid, and will have to trust to the luck of the prospector to find water at his need.

Where is he going? He knows not, quite, but desert miners in frequent gossips have told of districts here and there where he has never been, and in his dreams he sees a glowing prospect they've passed by. It matters not where his feet may lead him, so it be to a land that's new,

for ever his mind sees a golden promise in the country he has not seen. There's a misty cloud on the mountain ridge over which a new trail dips, in the shape of a beckoning finger, and his spirit obeys the call. So he talks to himself in a cheerful way and pulls hard on his pipe, for after brave dreams he is headed at last for that country over there.

THE MINER

His home is a one room canvas shack, its frame, thin scantlings and small pine poles that sometimes break with the weight of snow upon its canvas roof. His stove is a flimsy sheet-iron affair, and he gathers his wood from day to day. His fuel is piñon pine and brush, for nothing but these and joshua-trees will grow on those steep rock slopes. For water to drink and for other use, he has none but melted snow which stays where it drifted, in a tunnel mouth, white and cold until late in July. That is his precious reservoir, and he melts it at his need. His two burros scarce can keep the trail, so narrow and rough it is, but he drives them ten miles to the town once a month to stock up with beans, tobacco, coffee, flour, sugar, tea, and salt, then drives them home over dangerous trails sometimes knee-deep in snow, and in places snow-slides have buried the trail from ten to twenty feet. He is tall and walks with a clumping tread from wearing hob-nailed boots. His wrist is leather-strapped from a break it sustained once in a mine. He is not old, he is not young, but his eye is blue and clear. The whole long year he digs alone and rarely sees

a soul. He wants no partner in his toil, for he *knows* there's a fortune in his claims if only the man with money will come to purchase at his price.

Scarce wider than his burro's tread, the narrow shelf in the mountain slope winds down to his lonely little house, and there it abruptly stops, for he lives at the end of the trail. The hills rise steeply all about the bowl where his cabin stands and patches of snow cling to them for eight months in the year. From the top of the trail above his shack, wild mountain ranges roll away till the haze of distance merges them with the far horizon's misted rim. His house stands at the bottom of a well of lofty hills, so the winds that forever tear across the ridges high above are never felt at the bottom of his well. And he is truth personified.

It is a wild and lonely spot, so lonely and so wild it holds a secure sense of safe retreat, and he has grown to love it. He does not hate his kind, his hand is open, and his purse, to every man who needs. All the gossip of wild places he gives and takes at every cabin on his way from town. His mining is as primitive as in days long gone by, his tools, a single jack and hand-drill, his equipment, a windlass and a wooden bucket. Truly, the Forty-niner was hardly more the pioneer than he, for then men came in droves, and these, now lonesome, cold, and rocky

hills were full of human life. But he lives all alone and with no more necessities than they, although his gun is of more modern pattern. He writes but rarely, reads the papers avidly, and devours the melodrama in cheap magazines. And he's a very child, but, also, he's a man.

GOPHER HOLES

So dark, so close, so very, very still! — so dark a candle will but faintly light a tiny space; so close the air, that candle can barely keep alight; so still that all the vital energies athrob far, far above upon the busy earth, seem puny, meaningless, and matter not at all. For I am two hundred feet down under ground and a hundred feet away from the shaft, at the end of a narrow drift, while all the earth above seems waiting to crush that tunnel in, and that flickering candle seems the only link with the life above. There's a long slim ladder, its narrow treads wire-nailed, to hold my weight — will they hold it safely, I wonder, until I reach the top? In the roof of the old abandoned drift a mighty boulder, smooth and long, looks loose and about to fall — will it start when I pass under it and flatten me like a cake? And the glug of a chunk of heavy quartz dropped into the black sump water has an ominous, threatening sound, while boyhood tales of underground horrors flock to the memory.

But that is all at the outset, for the old miner loves the earth's dark caves and is never so happy nor so much at home as when he is bur-

rowing underground on the trail of the hidden pocket. Yet take away the interest that lies in the game of hide-and-seek for gold, the glitter of achievement, the excitement of the chase, and earth's dark, threatening bosom would lure him with no magnet of attraction, for men are surely not by nature gophers. They are not built that way, for proudly upheld heads and straight, upstanding spines were surely never given them to hold forever at a groveling angle.

But ever will be some to whom the earth call is a strong command that may not be denied, and the old mine gopher was surely one of these, though he came not West in the beginning to delve in darkness deep in Mother Earth. His coming was the outgrowth of the yearning of the pioneer to blaze a trail where all was new and wild, and to reach back close to all those sincere things that still held the unspoiled freshness of creation's dewy dawn. His very thoughts of the giant pines, of the wild, fierce beasts of prey, were sweet imaginings to him wherein he pictured a clear, clean corner of Mother Nature's old cracked mirror, where she still could see her face, and so he came, too, with the spirit of the boy who longs to slip the leading-strings of home, and pines to go adventuring.

The quest of gold was but an excuse for his love of the primitive, for when he made a goodly

strike, he went not back to an ordered life, but spent his stake with a largeness born of the open air, keeping only enough for a couple of burros and a prospector's kit. He never hears from his family and his kin he has forgot, for a shut-in life on an ordered scale would choke his desert breath.

A bed for the night in a disused shack is all the home he craves, with his burros browsing among the cans on the dump outside its door, or singing their desert music while he talks to himself inside; or, if it be summer, he's well content to spread his blankets beneath the stars, with plenty of wood and water near.

His brother is an eminent judge who knows not the feel of the desert wind, and the old mine gopher might have a home with him, but he prefers the sand for his bed and his burros for company.

The man who sunk that mining shaft with its drifts and ladder and inky sump was such a miner, and when he struck rich ore in the shaft he sold the claim for a good round sum, and hit the trail with never a care till his money went and his grub gave out, then he dug again, in other men's mines, until he had saved a little stake.

In the cool of a lovely desert dawn the sandy

hummocks crowned with sage showed gray against a sky of pearl, and rounding a hummock ahead of me two little burros plodded near, herded along by a tall old man. His gray mustache swept his bronzed cheeks, his bright gray eyes were full of life, and he stepped like a boy on a camping trip. Those burros and their burdens were the whole of that little stake.

"Howdy," he sang out to me. "This country's too plumb full o' holes. I heard of a country way up yonder where a feller's a chance ter make a stake, an' where he don't stand ter break a laig at every step in a gopher hole." With an adios he left me and I heard his burros' tinkling bells long after they had dropped from sight beyond the big sand dunes. Our trails have never crossed since then, but I hope he has not had to dig in another man's gopher hole.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

I'm a sad old mule with long, long ears,
An' I've said goodbye to my prime.
When I think of the pullin', dusty years
I reckon I've wasted time.
I mind when my skinner bent his head
To fix my heavy chain trace.
I wish to cactus I'd kicked him dead,
Planted my foot in his face.
For after his blacksnake done its worst,
He doubled a heavy chain
An' flogged my back till it like to burst,
Then cussed me again an' again.
My nine big mates was willin' to pull,
But on the wheel was I.
I didn't budge, just stood like a fool,
But the devil was in my eye.
I didn't sing, but I like to died
When that skinner sat on a rock and cried.
They was tears o' rage, an' I knew his plight,
For he'd lose his pay if he didn't make
The ore train that left that night,—
Seven miles to the waitin' train
Down a steep an' rocky road.
I waited till all the light was gone,
Then I started to pull the load.
My mate on the wheel started up with me,

My mates ahead got into their collars,
My skinner jumped off his rock in glee,
For he still might save his dollars.
So he grabs up the reins, slams down his brake,
An' we groaned an' creaked down the mountain
side.

.

We're a mile from the station when the train
pulls out,
An' the words of that skinner was balm to me.
I couldn't make out what 'twas all about,
But he raved at my hellish deviltry.
All 'cause I paid him back for the pain
He gave with that doubled iron chain.
An' that is a sample of what I got
When I helped haul loads over deserts hot,
An' many a skinner has just missed death
When he's beat me until he has lost his breath.
Now I'm laid up here with a busted leg
In a dusty, hot corral,
To watch my fool kin draggin' by
With droopin' head an' sleepy eye.
I've heard, in the distant, busy city
Even a mule they treat with pity,
That they don't follow the Desert rule,
" He ain't nothin' only a damn ole mule."
O ten years in alfalfa I would give
For one kick at the skinners that I've let live.
So I'm wishin' for kicks that never will be
An' regrettin' lost opportunity.

PROSPECTIN'

I'm off fer the hills
On a fishin' trip,
An' I've paid my bills.
Now here's a tip —
If I hear a lisp from the Will-o'-the-Wisp,
That mean little devil, I'll sure get level,
Fer I'm jist goin' fishin'.
Adios !

If he shows his glim
While I'm on my way
I'll laugh at him,
Fer I aim ter stay
In a shady spot where it ain't so hot,
An' where I'm told there ain't no gold,
Fer I'm jist goin' fishin'.
Adios !

I'll lay in the shade
Of a cottonwood,
Where game's a plenty
An' fishin's good,
Fer I aim ter sorter stick ter water,
An' loaf an' rest like all possest,
Fer I'm jist goin' fishin'.
Adios !

• • • • •

Hello, Ole Timer!
I jist got back,
An' nary a damn thing
In my sack.
Fishin'? Hell! I ain't had a smell
O' fish or water, an' I jist orter
A-gone a fishin'.

Dammit!

On the aidge o' the Desert
I struck some float,
An' it looked so good
That it got my goat.
So I hunted round over miles o' ground
Ter locate the ledge on the Desert's aidge,
When I orter been fishin'.

Dammit!

Now my grub is gone
An' my hands is sore,
My shoes is worn
An' my pants is tore,
My burro's sick an' I lost my pick,
An' I ain't got a red ter feed my head,
When I orter be eatin' fish.

Dammit!

That float may a-rolled
From the skinner's load,

But it showed big gold
Right by the road,
'An' I didn't know how fur I'd go,
Fer the outcrop might pop inter sight
Any minute, **an'** that beats fishin'.

DRY COLORS



AL DESIERTO

Oh, for a brain that's dipped in fire,
And a pen like a lava flow,
Then I'd make you feel to my heart's desire
The Land Where The Sunsets Go.

Oh, for a mind with understanding
To lay the wild wastes bare,
No need for your lonely wandering,
My pen could take you there.

You'd read in riots of color, you'd see
Black hills against blue sky lined.
You'd feel its fathomless mystery
And the sweep of its mighty wind.

But I cannot tell, for would you feel
Its mystery, you must go
To ride its mountains and fierce hot sands,
And live in its vivid glow.

Then ho, for the blazing deserts bare!
I would that my words could give
A sense of the brooding death that's there,
And the hidden lives that live.

Would language be easy, I wonder,
And its tongue more sweetly heard
Could we crowd a world of impressions
Into one luminous word?

But no word can paint its splendor
Nor its grim menace tell,
For the desert to some is the hand of God,
And some men call it Hell.

A DESERT DAY

The sun is glinting on far mountain snows.
A freight team's coming from the distant town.
I see a long dust column where it crawls,
For it moves miles below me, far, far down,
When the wind blows up the cañon in the
morning.

A thin, blue smoke thread trails a tiny train
Crawling across the desert with its load.
I hear no toot, nor panting steam refrain.
At dawn, it bears the mail away each day,
When the wind blows up the cañon in the
morning.

After the train has gone, the desert sleeps.
Even the skinner's dust cloud is no more,
For swallowed in the cañon, up it creeps.
Sand cedars frame the red-roofed town in green,
When the wind blows up the cañon in the
morning.

Then far below my shack, perched high above
The cañon road, the long, slow team drags up
The steep and rocky road, nor seems to move.
The skinner's blacksnake cracks like pistol shot,
While the cañon wind is still at sleepy noontime.

In that silence the wagon's creaks and groans,
Mingled with curses flung at straining mules,
Come up to me, for words, and, even, tones
Are heard a half mile in those quiet hills,
When the cañon wind is still at sleepy noontime.

On the desert's edge, beyond the town, inclines
A long, steep, gray-green mountain topped with
snow,
While at its timber line, huge, straggling pines
Are stippled black against the lower snows
When the cañon wind awakes in afternoontime.

Black swarms of ducks fly quacking to their rest
Beside the big, dark, brooding soda lake.
A band of yellow light dies in the west.
Against it, snowy peaks show purple-gray,
When the wind blows down the cañon in the
evening.

The desert's one gray blur. A darker blur
Upon it is the town. Its lights shine out.
Then nearer, jagged cañon walls show dark
Against the quickly paling sky of dusk,
When the wind blows down the cañon in the star-
light.

• • • • • •

I know the train is in. I see its light
Moving along the now black desert floor,

While on beyond, towers that mighty wall.
'Tis purple dark from foot to snow-capped
peaks.

Grim, silent hills about me loom up black.
The stars break forth in frosty scintillance,
So close they seem suspended just above
The higher buttes behind me to the east.
The air's so still upon the higher hills
It seems to be alive, with held-in breath.
And then a coyote howls and yaps, and then
The wind roars down the cañon for 'tis nightfall.

A DESERT NIGHT

It is evening in the desert
And the blazing day is dead.
It is evening in the desert.
Though the flaming sun has sped,
He leaves some flickering embers
From his fires that burned so bright,
And shadows steal o'er the desert floor
To herald the coming night.
The Will-o'-the-Wisp is dancing,
But the sunset hides his light.

It is dusky in the desert,
In the west is a yellow glow.
It is dusky in the desert
When the winds begin to blow.
Mountain peaks cut the purple sky
In a black and jagged heap,
When a sigh breathes out of the stillness
That wakes its brooding deep.
Then the soft wind sways the sage-brush
And the sand stirs in its sleep.

Darkness broods in the desert,
The sand gleams dimly gray.
Darkness broods in the desert,
Under the stars' cold ray.
Then I feel like a lonely waif afloat

On an ocean without a tide.
Then thoughts troop, weird and ghostly,
That the bright day has defied,
And my soul walks alone in the silence,
For even the wind has died.

The moon is lighting the desert
From over the mountains' rim.
The moon is lighting the desert
With a light that is silver-dim,
And the sand is a sea of silver
That fades mysteriously
Into the luminous moon-mist
Beyond which the shadows lie.
Then my spirit dreams in the moonlight,
For the darkness has gone from me.

THIRST

Below those snowy peaks that hem my gaze
I know full well cool rivulets course down
To moisten thirsty valleys far below,
Where cattle graze knee-deep in rich, sweet
grass.

Though they loom close, viewed through my
burning eyes,
Thirst and starvation lie 'twixt them and me.
The sand is hot and deep.

And, on the other hand, rise bare rock walls.
No snow is there, but grim, dead loneliness
Where man must pack the food and drink he
needs.

The dwelling-place of buzzard and coyote.
And all the deadly creatures of the wild
Lurk in those gloomy cañons.
Here, at my feet, a horse's skeleton,
Embedded in the sand for many years,
Tells how my pony and myself may fare.
There, where the desert meets the sky ahead,
The vista is a glare of glowing brass
Misted across with heat.

No water's nearer than those icy peaks.
There is no shade within a hundred miles,

Nor any growing thing to feed upon.
My belt is tightened to its final hole,
The water in my canteen is all gone,
My little horse is lame.

• • • • •

I know a shady, woodland road back home,
Flanked on one side by swiftly flowing water;
The other side, a tree-grown mountain slope.
Beside the road, beneath that leafy slope
Roofed with young saplings casting grateful
shade,
A big, deep spring wells, dark and cold and
pure,
That used to bead my cup with icy sweat —
But "That way madness lies."

THE PAINT-BOX

There's the blinding white of the alkali,
There's the cindery black of the malapai.
The great gray Sierra wall behind
The round brown hills that are sharp defined.
There are hills of purple, hills of blue,
Hills of a brilliant copper hue.
There's the slaty brown clay merged with red,
Crisscrossed with cracks of the old lake bed.
There's the dazzling yellow of the sands
With a gray-green splash where the sage-brush
stands.

The sparkling turquoise of the lake
Where even a duck no drink dare take.
A flash of all colors here and there,
For lizards are any and everywhere.
A flame of red at the touch of dawn,
A flame of yellow when day has gone,
And ever the pitiless blue sky.

.

Then God shuts the lid of His paint-box tight,
His colors all buried in blue-black night,
While through holes in the cover the stars'
bright glance
Lends to the darkness a dim romance.

HANGMAN'S TREE

Where water will not run nor flower bloom
Man may not live but for a single day.
Such land holds earth's purse she gives but to
those
Who dare her wildest moods.

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A mountain saddle lies between two peaks,
While just beyond that saddle is a flat,
And on that flat and on the slopes nearby
There dwell five thousand men.

On one side, sloping to the desert floor
Through cañons deep, there winds a rough,
steep road ;
While on the other, rocky ridge on ridge
Billows away to the East.

In that rough town thrive twenty-five saloons,
Red-shirted miners bringing them their trade.
For the fierce, fevered life and that keen air
Beget a raging thirst.

Across the hot road a big spider crawls
Whose sting will run swift poison through the
veins.
The scorpion seeks the dampest spot he knows.
The busy town is still

For it is day. The gophers in their holes
Are not more busy than those red-clad men
Delving and sweating in earth's mighty breast,
Fighting to reach her heart.

At night the stars that seem to touch those
peaks

Above that saddle, look on different scenes,
For lights blaze out from twenty-five wide doors
Toward which the whole town flocks.

A babel of mixed sounds floats on the night,
Of faro, poker, pedro, and the dance,
The fiddles' scrape, the shuffling of feet,—
All fused in one loud din.

And then a shot, and then a sudden hush,
Then angry voices raised in strident speech,
And women's screams and men's deep, cursing
tones,
And then a crowd pours out.

Bedraggled women and big, drunken men
And cripples, dogs, and children but a few,
All headed for that big pine on the slope
From which a rope hangs down.

In that crowd's center walks a scowling one.
His hat is off, his hair disordered, wild.
His hands are tied behind him, and his look
Is sullen, scowling, black.

He curses them while they secure the noose,
He curses them with his last choking breath.
And then a fusillade of shots, and then —
Deep silence over all.

• • • • •

A roaring wind one furious, wild night
Fanned into flame a little vagrant spark.
Five thousand souls were homeless, and the hills
Were as they e'er had been.

A cañon dark where sun shines but at noon,
A big, old pine upon its nearer slope.
Nature has guarded what grew by its will —
Even the rope has gone.

A saddle in the hills where coyotes lurk,
An old slag pile, but not a soul in sight.
No miners' shack to humanize the scene.
The desert has come back.

**TALKING WATER AND WHISPER-
ING WIND**

RUNNING WATER

I remember the rich clad hills so softly curved
and green,
And the lovely, sleepy valley with a white house
here and there,
And I mind how the clean gray beeches hung
over the ravine
With its rippling, singing rivulet that flowed so
crystal clear.

A covered bridge bestrode the creek, its tunnel
of deep shade
A breath of coolness when the sun was beating
upon the road.
On its rattling planks, the hollow rhythm my
horse's hoof-beats made
Was music, but more was the liquid roar as be-
neath me the water flowed.

There was another, a broader, stream where
the road ran through a ford,
Where the water tinkled gently in its pebbly,
sandy bed.
With a cool brocade of sun and shade its shal-
low bed is floored,

While I hear the liquid slish and plunge of
my horse's splashing tread.

Beside that road was a welling spring, deep and
dark and cool.

Bright cresses edged the tiny stream that over-
flowed its cool, green lip.

I hear theplash of the startled frog as he dives
into its pool,

And the spring's soft, liquid gurgle and its
soothing drip, drip, drip.

When the parched and blazing desert speaks to
me in fevered strain,

Dreams of shade and dewy moisture for that
fevered voice atones.

Then the organ notes of ocean surges beat upon
my brain

And the lilt of running water as it purrs among
the stones.

THE RECKLESS DESERT WIND

The sand is deep and the sage grows high,
No water there is in sight.

The only rock is black malapai,
Dead mountains to left and right.

The single sign of man's habitance
Is an empty whiskey jug.

The only insect my eye can see
Is a toiling doodle-bug.

Now blow, you wind, o'er the desert wild,
Blow out all thoughts of men,
And sweep by me with a clean, dry rush,
Till I feel like a boy again.

I shout wild things with no ear to hear,
While the wind spins the sands upcurled,
As I gallop fast toward their yellow rim,
For I'm at the end of the world.

There's never a thought can make me pause,
Nor a sight that my eyes light on,
Though I see in the sand the dry, white bones
Of a human skeleton.

Then I'll laugh today though there's hell to pay
When this reckless mood is past.
For the wind's deep hum is telling me,
"The desert's got you at last."

A MESSAGE

I start with a little drip, drip, drip,
On slopes of eternal snow,
Then I grow to a flowing rivulet,
When I dash through the gorge below.

My ice cold veins are the runnels
That flow under frozen crust,
And the icy springs from lower slopes
That feed my hurrying lust.

I jump, I shout, and I foam, and dance
Like a wild, mad thing at play,
But I cannot linger, for swelling veins
Are speeding me on my way.

Through gulches dark, over jagged rocks
I follow my destiny,
And I roar to the pines as I flash by,
And they whisper back to me,

“Take some of our peace to your desert,
And take it a memory green;
Take some of our shade to your desert
Along with your cold canteen.”

I jostle the rocks as I growl along
And I spray the miner’s shack,

As I bear on my black and rippling flood
The forest's broken wrack.

I am kissed by the sun and tossed by the wind,
I am robbed by human things,
But ever I con in my memory
The song that the big pine sings,

For I'm bound for the yellow desert
So bright and barren, so wild and bare,
And my pace is slowed to a sluggish glide
Ere I sink my cool flood there.

Oh, I'm gentle in the desert,
Just before my race is run,
As I liquidly lap my message
To the ear of the thirsty one.

Drink it down with me, O Desert Man,
'Twill make my life blood sweet.
Drink it down with me, that message,
'Twill make your drink complete.

“ I bring still peace to your desert,
I bring it a memory green,
I bring you the vision of cool, pine shade,
And I bring you a cold canteen.”

THE WOOING WIND

She stands sturdy and strong through all his
wooing,
Though her plumes are slender, her branches
slim.
Never hiding, though storms are brewing,
When he wrenches in rage to her undoing,
After speeding to her from the desert's rim.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

The walls of their house are the mountains
high,
And the desert floor their bed,
The blue of heaven their canopy.
And he woos her, with many a gentle sigh,
At dawn, when the sun shows red.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

He never need call, for he's ever nigh.
He heaps up the sand about her feet
To keep them warm when he's roaring by,
For his is not always a gentle sigh,
His caresses not always sweet.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

His fingers he twines in her feathery hair,
He dances about to catch her eye,
He hums in glee when she speaks him fair —

So seldom she does that he might despair,
Her sage-plumed head she rears so high,
Were it not that he holds her rooted there.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

He wafts to her kisses when days are still,
He murmurs low to her in the night.
He has builded about her a little hill,
Scooping the desert sands until
He has raised her to greater height.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

Oh, he is a patient, persistent wooer —
For thousands of years he's sighed —,
But though he is wealthy and she is poor,
Though he's tied her fast and has her sure,
She will never be his bride.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle

For she looks at his soft approach askance,
And she smiles at his ceaseless murmuring.
Though she never refuses to join his dance,
Yet she sways away with her gray-green glance,
For she is a sage old thing.
The wind is wooing the Desert Belle.

THE WIND IN THE SAGE

'Tis the breath of dawn, then early morn, and
still —

As still as death,
With the desert gray as a form of clay until
It draws its breath,
When so faint a sigh sweeps the alkali
'Twould scarce flutter a fairy page.
The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage.

Through a cañon cleft in the desert wall, shoots
One long shaft of sun.

Drawn away the cloak of gray. That shaft
salutes
The desert day, begun.

Now sharp the line of steep incline that in the
dawn

The eye could not engage.
The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage

The dazzling white of the alkali, like snow,
Makes blue spots dance

Before my eyes, and the sands are aglow
With the risen sun's advance,

Thin spirals of sand are swirling, blowing,
Whirling in a rage.

The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage

The air is hot and still, the lizards sleep,
The sand's a yellow glare.

Even the coyote ventures not to creep
From his dark, rocky lair.

There is no shade in all that desert waste
Save in its mountain vassalage.

The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage

Then fall black shadows on the desert floor
Like giant pools of ink,

That lengthen ever as the sun sinks lower
Beyond the mountains' brink,

Until the valley floor is filled with shade,
And then 'tis evening dusk.

The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage

The grim walls rise on either hand huge, shadowy blurs

Against a purple sky.

The yellow dies out in the west and then there purrs

Across the waste, a sigh.

Then ghostly desert voices breathe as they have done

Through all creation's age.

The Desert Wind is whispering to the Sage

The Will-o'-the-Wisp is a nuisance.
He's always about at night,
He hasn't a sense of honor,—
He's just a malicious sprite.
When he saw what the wind was doing
He danced with insane delight,
Then lurked 'neath a sand-dune to watch the
 wooing,
After hiding his lurid light.
And when the night wind faintly stirred
This is what he heard

WHAT THE WIND WHISPERED

Over blazing sands I have sped to you
From my home on the world's edge dim.
I have sailed down swiftly from out the blue,
I have swooped from the mountains' rim.

I have lurked behind dunes like a lean coyote
To play with you hide-and-seek.
I've watched you as high in the sky I float
Or swirled in the desert reek.

When the spirit expands in the budding night
I bring you, at dusk, my softest sigh,
For the sun has gone, the desert's brooding,
And there's only you and I.

Then I sink to rest by your slender side,
As the whisper of dusk I bring
To the sand and the sky. There is naught be-
side,
For the desert is slumbering.

Have you heard what I've whispered to you
through the years
And couldn't you ever guess?
Bend low, O Sage, and incline your ears
In our desert loneliness

146 THE LAND WHERE THE SUNSETS GO

And I'll breathe it to you on the twilight air
With my shyest, light caress,
“I love to blow through your feathery hair
And to play with your gray-green dress.”

DESERT SPECIMENS

I'M GOING TO THAT COUNTRY OVER THERE

O the gold I've found and squandered
In the many lands I've wandered
Is enough to make of me a millionaire.
But I've had my fun and spent it,
And I never will repent it.
Now I'm going to That Country Over There.

Oh, of pictures I've a brainful.
Some are glad and some are painful,
Some are funny, some enough to raise the hair.
Now I'll paint some brand-new pages,
For I'm going where the sage is
In that glowing, torrid Country Over There.

There I'll start out with my burro.
Ne'er a plant and ne'er a furrow
Will greet me, for there are no ranches there.
Only prospectors and freighters
And a few old second-raters,
Who swap stories in That Country Over There.

But I'll leave those Rats behind me
Where they'll never, never find me,

For I know a cañon wild and deep and fair.
Fair, because the sun's not broiled it,
Fair, because man has not spoiled it,
Though it's in that burning Country Over
There.

There I'll find the rich gold, pronto,
And I'll prospect where I want to,
And I'll eat and sleep out in the desert air.
And I'll make to no man payment,
For I'll be the only claimant
In that free, wild desert Country Over There.

No use is there for doctor's pill,
A man keeps well if heat don't kill.
He gets what he likes, if he likes country bare.
The nights are chill and deadly still,
But a man can smoke and think his fill
In that quiet, restful Country Over There.

The sun will rise in purple skies
And glitter all day in burning eyes,
There's never a thing will shade its burning
glare.
Never that thought my plan debarred,
I and my jacks are iron hard.
We'll live and thrive in That Country Over
There.

Then, Ah Sing, hurry up the mush,
I and my jacks will hit the brush

When the dawning lights above the cañon flare.
Say adios to all the men,
For if I don't show up again
I've hit That *Farther Country Over There.*

THE BARK OF THE COYOTE

I can live without food and drink for days,
I can feed where you would hunger and die,
I can run like the wind and beat your bronc,
For the desert shade am I.

Just out of your sight I love to chatter
When the stars shine out and you've gone to
bed,
For I want you to know that I hover near,
Watching you work and — waiting.

This desert is mine and I lived in it
Before you ever were born to the world.
Before you ever could know it was here,
My race had prowled it alone.

My home is the peak and the sliding shale
And the cavern dark where I house my young,
And the cañon bed where is deepest shade,
And the whole wide desert world.

I have seen you come, I have seen you go,
I have picked my meal from your dead men's
bones.
I was here before you, and when you left
I topped your ruins and laughed.

For I love the rocks and the burning sands,
And I hate you with a burning hate.
I fear you living, I laugh at you dead,
But I will outlive you here.

And the keenest joy that I know about
Is to watch you leaving with dragging steps
From your ruined labors, where I am crouched,
And yap at your sure defeat.

DESERT CHILDREN

Their shirts are of blue denim,
Their chaps are long and wide,
And shiny, battered gun butts peep
From the pockets at their side.
Their hats are high-crowned, pointed,
And their spurs, magnificent.
Their movements are disjointed,
And their talk, profanely eloquent.

For they are trying mightily —
One small boy and his pal —
To rope the desert broncos
In the livery corral.

Those broncos might be tamely caught
At any time of day,
But they prefer to rope them
In the good old cowboy way,
For the sandy desert road runs close
Where cowboy once chased Indian.
Though there's no brush, they need those chaps,
And they rope their broncs "like Daddy done."

For of all the aspirations
That breed in the desert sun,

Theirs is the desert yearning
To be a son of a gun.

He wears no Indian breech-clout,
Nor leggins, buckskin-fringed,
But blue and greasy overalls,
And his face is copper-tinged.
He crouches behind a big sand-dune,
For he is the chief of a raiding band.
His squaw mother's greasy skinning knife
Is clutched in his small brown hand.

For he sees his paleface enemies
Preparing to mount and ride,
So he will ambush and scalp them, both,
At the bend in the Divide.
Beside him his cayuse crouches,
With his long and ragged coat.
What though the paleface calls him
"Half collie and half coyote"?
He will mount and ride in a minute
And the wind will race with his flying feet.
His little fat body's as still as a cat's,
As he visions his enemy's rout complete.

For he is a mighty warrior,
As he crouches in the sand,
Leading his tribe to victory —
Lord of that desert land.

These are the men of tomorrow,
That ever look back in their play,
Touching with glamour heroic
The story of yesterday.

GOBS AND HOBGOBS

THE INDIAN AND THE PRINCESS

He sleeps, that feathered warrior.
His head forms a mountain crest,
The last stern, Indian barrier
Between the East and the West.

Above his mighty, war-plumed head
The Sleeping Beauty lies.
Only the cloud caps kiss her brow,
Only the sun, her eyes.

Only the eagle swoops above
Their silent, massive heads.
The only fires that warm them
Are the sunsets' flaming reds.

When the gods were young he stole her
From a distant, fair-haired race,
And they camped for the night on the shoulder
Of that lofty mountain place.

Then he slept at her feet in the sunset,
His stern, set face to the skies,
And he was a mighty medicine man
So he sealed with sleep her eyes.

No fairy prince will awaken
With a kiss that sleeping one.
That Chief no Manitou will beckon,
For the days of the gods are done.

So eagles float and scream and wheel
Above his cold, proud head.
No more to Manitou he'll kneel,
For the Indian Chief is dead.

And his captive sleeps forever,
A deep and dreamless sleep,
Since he is dead who could sever
The charm of her slumber deep.

Now the Indian fairy dances
On the brow of his stern, still head,
For lightsome spirit fancies
May live when the body's dead.

Now the stars bend from above her
To shine on her shaded eyes.
And though she will sleep forever,
From her brow sweet thoughts arise.

A cool wind blows o'er the desert
From her lofty mountain peak,
And though she is deeply sleeping,
I dream that I hear her speak.

“ You fashion me as a woman
From snow and rocks and clods,
For the mind that weaves the fairies
Is the mind that makes the gods.

“ Yet all the gods of Olympus
Are not so great as I,
For I'll still sleep on my mountain
When all the gods shall die.

“ For my rock-ribbed mountain reaches
Far down into the earth,
And never will be riven
Until a new world's birth.

“ You see me, as all humans do,
As clothed in human guise,
But never will you see me true
Until with clearer eyes.”

I rubbed my eyes and there uprose
A mighty mountain, grim and torn,
That had pierced dawning skies of rose
Since first creation's morn,

And long before that later morn,
When were created gods and men.
Since race of man had not been born,
Of course, there were no fairies then.

I sighed. But in the sunset glow
Just as I turned to leave,
A fairy jigged on the Chieftain's brow,
And I saw her bosom heave.

MOUNTAIN MUSIC

It is not the song of the mountain-lark
With his plaintive cheep and call,
It is not the whir of a humming-bird
As he bores to the heart of a flower,
It is not the hum of a desert insect
Lodged in the cañon wall,
But the tinkling ring of fairy bells
As they sound the still noon hour.

They ring at noon when the sun's ablaze
And the cañon winds are still,
When the hawk is drowsing on his eyrie,
And the coyote's hidden deep,
When the shimmering heat in waves floats up
From sage and rocky hill,
When the midday hush is on the world,
And the mountains are asleep.

The desert fairy folds his wings
When the Southern Cross appears,
And goes to bed like an Indian
When night her curtain fells.
But through the livelong desert day
There's a-ringing in my ears
Of husky elfin voices and the chime
Of crystal bells.

The tiniest cactus needle-points form barbs
For their long bow shafts.

Their arrows rest in a quiver made from
A little flower pod.

Their war-bonnet feathers are fashioned from
The fluff that the light air wafts.

With moccasins made from the skins of seeds
Their dusky feet are shod.

O search for them not in the moonlight
Nor in folds of the hills at night,

For they are not like the fairies
That glamoured our childhood days.

The desert elves sport only in the
Broad and blazing light,

Then kindle their camp-fires in the dusk,
And sleep with the sun's last rays.

And so if you take the mountain trails
That up from the desert run,
And your horse, looking down the cañon,
Snorts and halts and pricks his ears

And gazes with starting eyeballs where
There is naught but desert sun,
You may know that the mountain fairies' song
Is the ringing sound he hears.

NIMROD

Bright is the vision, though rarest,
When my dreaming eyes are blest
With a sight of the Indian fairies
Who dwell in the hills of the West.
But few are the fortunate humans
To be their invisible guest.

Yet once, as I followed a desert trail
Up into a cañon wild,
From my eyes fell the grown up scales
And I was as a little child
Who lives in a visionary world,
By fairy dreams beguiled.

My mind for one sweet half-hour
Was free from all human woes.
No mortal care had power,
No thoughts of duty rose.
Elfin joy was my dower
In that land where the sage-brush grows.

I swung along up the cañon bare
Through a realm that we all must leave,
And I found no portal, no sentry there,
No warder, in helm and greave,
For it is freer than realms less fair —
That Kingdom of Make-Believe.

My eyes lost their human glances,
And a bright, new world upreared,
Bathed in soft amber lances
Of a sun that was dreamy, weird.
Then, trooping, came elfin fancies
And the fairy folk appeared.

At my feet knelt a dusky fairy
Who a shaft on his bowstring held ;
In his ant hill shelter, lurking, wary,
A strange air beast beheld.
He did not heed my coming
For I had been fairy-belled.

His bow was a needle of piñon pine
With a woven web for string.
His scalp feathers, iridescent, fine,
Were plucked from a humming-bird's wing.
A breech-clout, woven of spider's twine,
Was his only covering.

When his bowstring sped the tiny shaft
I could hear its humming twang —
Then down the road, a skinner laughed
And his curling blacksnake sang.
Vanished my hunter at human sound,
Though a bell-like shout still rang.

Then back came the sunlight swiftly,
Hot, white, and glittering.

Still I heard at my feet, though faintly,
A war song, triumphing.
And down at my feet a tarantula-hawk
Thrashed about with a broken wing.

DESERT WITCHCRAFT

I don't say that I'm locoed — an' I don't claim
that I ain't —
Fer a-sayin' I'll stick ter the desert till I climb
the Golden Stairs.
But the way they hugged the house at home
jist makes a feller faint,
An' the feel of a good horse under me is bet-
ter'n rockin' chairs.

I hiked the hills like all possessed when I first
come from back home.
Ole timers called me nutty, but I didn't mind
their jeers,
Fer I was keen fer the ring o' gold an' the city's
noisy hum.
Now the mountain fairies' music is a-ringin' in
my ears.

So I've kind o' lost all love o' gold but the fun
o' huntin' it.
An' when I git home letters written implorin'ly
Fer me ter come home, I tell 'em I ain't struck
it yit,
But it's the desert Will-o'-the-Wisp that is
a-keepin' me.

I don't know much 'bout heaven, but I reckon *ef*
I goes,
I'll want a tol'able big corral an' a man's size
sleepin' cage.
An' I'll tell the tally man at the gate he c'n
have my eyes an' nose
Ef he's goin' ter rope an' tie me out o' sight an'
smell o' sage.

They're sleepin' soft in the good ole home an'
a-wishin' fer me there,
An' I hone ter see fruit blossoms in May an'
ter hear the crunch o' snow,
An' I want ter smell the Atlantic an' breathe its
salty air,
But the wind o' the desert has wrapped me
round an' won't never let me go.

WILL-O'-THE-WISP

I know that across those mountains
Lies a country about like this,
And I know that poisoned fountains
Fringe the way, and the rattlers' hiss
Is sibilant on that blistering trail,
And the sand is like the sea,
But the Will-o'-the-Wisp of the desert
Is a-beckoning to me.

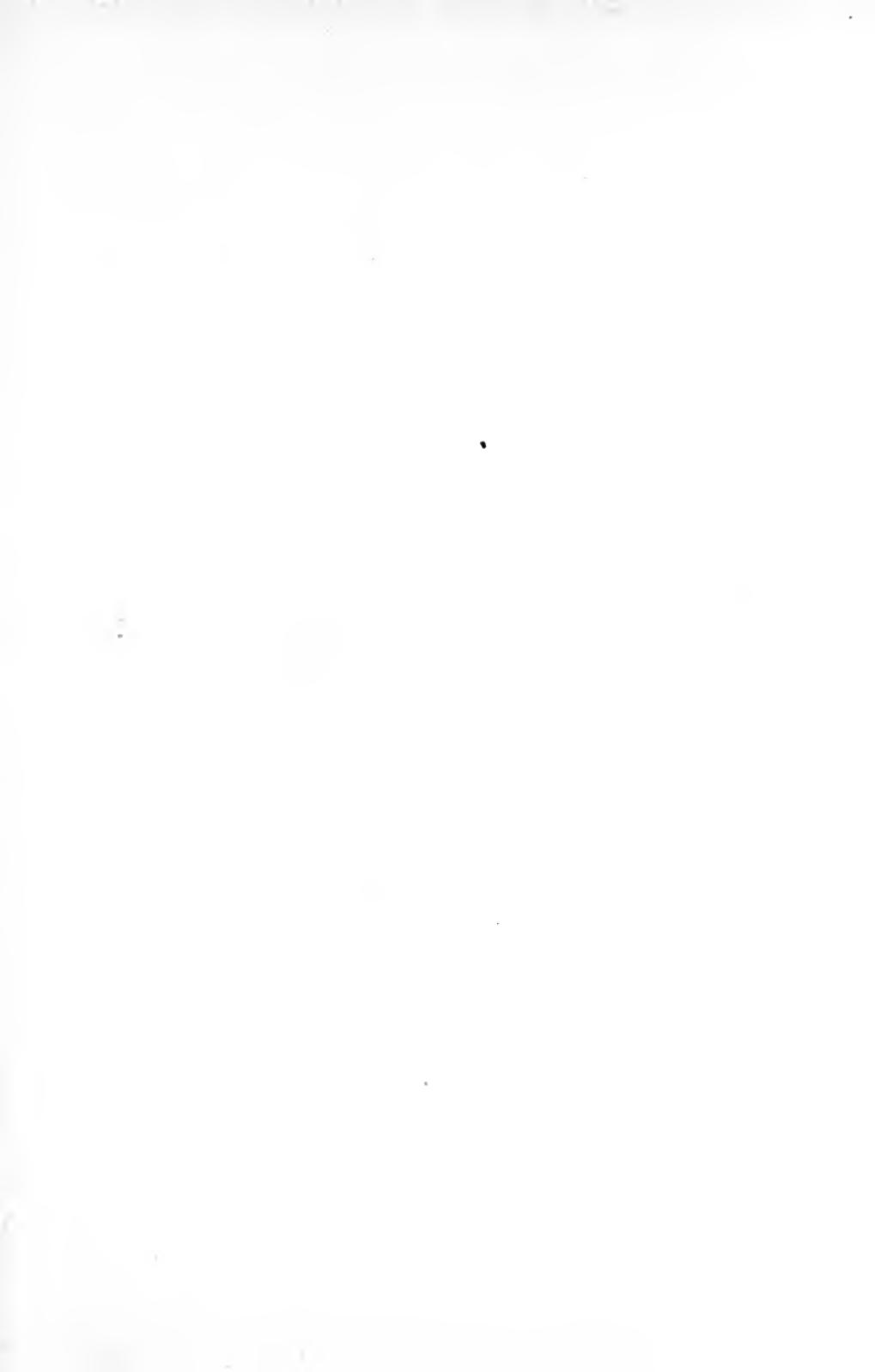
I know that others both skilled and bold
Have taken this trail before,
Hunting long for the yellow gold,
Only to come back worn and sore —
That is, if they ever came back at all —
And though all this I know,
When the Will-o'-the-Wisp of the desert calls
I pack my jack and go.

The cactus grows and flaunts its rose
Beside the trail my burro takes.
The hot day comes, the hot day goes,
Desert night wind the whole world shakes.
Then a dancing light in the velvet dark
Afar on the waste I see,
And I know that the desert Will-o'-the-Wisp
Is flashing his light at me.

His elfin light is of fancy made.
Yet he jeers at me like a clown
By flashing scenes of liquid shade
On the noon sky, but upside down,
For he carries slides with his lantern by day
To tease me maliciously.

Though I know he's the Will-o'-the-Wisp, yet I
swear
That he's holding a cup to me.

He has no form, he has no face,
He has only a dancing light
To lure me on from place to place —
To every place but the right.
Though I stumble and faint and burn with
thirst,
I follow hopefully,
For the Will-o'-the-Wisp of the desert
Is waving his light to me.



PINE AND CHAPARRAL

GROWING PAINS

With her smooth egg-shaped stone pestle poised in her sinewy brown hand, with the evening meal half-mortared on the squaw rock where she sat, while her lord and master lolled beside a little twinkling fire, she gazed on the clear, soft western sky shading from rose up to the deepest azure, and the sharp silhouettes of branching trees, their limbs and leaves a graceful tracery stamped black against the dying light, gave birth in her primitive, misty brain to a delicate idea. With finest sinew, before the fire, she copied the dainty pattern she saw in the sunset glow.

She was beaten next day by her irate man, for she had forgotten his dinner in copying nature's laciness.

But art had advanced a step.

PINES

They are strong, those pines. Their soft and low-toned converse is the pent up quietness of force, and even when some raging fire, sweeping the country with a devastating flame, has laid them low, straightway they spring again. Their shade is dark and cool, their every whisper music, their quiet green a blessed thing to hot sun-smitten eyes, and the aid they give to man is far beyond all computation in a land where other forests do not thrive. They are not cheerful in a common way; their looks are somber, and their shade too deep. But there is a quiet, a reposeful peace beyond light joy, and when you seek for that, the pines stretch forth their shadowed arms to fold you closely in. The bed they offer is the softest, given of their best; their shelter of the closest, when winter storms assail. Their breath is sweet to tired lungs, and where no other tree will grow, they rear their dark green shoulders up above the gray-green chaparral saving the country from the stain of being but a waste of brush. Where an old placer dump would lie an ugly scar on nature's face, springs up a

clump of quiet straight brown boles holding aloft thick plumes of long green needles, crowning an erstwhile bare and rocky mound with shafts of sylvan beauty. They are not pretty — far too big for that. Their steadfastness, their calm, unswerving growth, will shame all littleness, and where the giants of that mighty race rear their proud tops in lofty majesty, drinking in sunlight from the blue above toward which they are advancing by just growing, or where they stand like warriors of old against the fiercest blows, there weakness may not comfortably dwell, nor aught of littleness.

A MAGIC PLUME

A plume of long-leaved pine.
How it brings the pine trees to these tired eyes
of mine!
How they towered, straight and tapering,
Like a mighty, still brigade,
Or like pillars in a temple,
With their carpet of brown shade.

A piny, long-leaved plume.
How it opens into forest aisles the close walls of
this room!
I can see that tall shaft rearing
This green broom into the blue,
And I see it shrink and quiver
As they cut its great heart through.

A polished dark green crest
That raised its long-leaved needles sharply
dark against the West,
And stilled the sough and swish below,
When the stars came forth to sing.
So proud 'twould scarcely sway to hear
The lower winds' whispering.

O sturdy piny broom!
The sight of your dark greenness my clouded
thought illumes,

And you sweep away the cobwebs
With your needles long and fine,
For you breathe the living spirit
Of the strong, aspiring pine.

A SILVER SUNSET

From clear, pale blue of hot and normal day, the pine clad western hills are backed by haze of luminous silver gray that shades up to the zenith. No yellow color's there, no rose, no blue, but all the earth is bathed in spectral light, more near akin to ghostly early moonlight than to the tarnished gold of dying day. The silver-gray behind those western hills is slowly changing to the palest yellow, through which no ray of the descending sun pierces to earth. Then, just above that yellowish gray band, a field of deepest azure shows where, on wonted days, that azure would be hidden by gold and flaming red. Above the azure field are long, thin clouds of silver-gray, of amber, amethyst. Above them, rosy clouds, as if the sun, failing to reach the earth, would paint his farewell on the sky. Where, on another day, the flaming sunset colors fill the west, that field of deepest azure takes their place to drop a cool, blue curtain down between the sun's glance and the sleeping world, leaving it but one fiery line of light above the

hills; and peeping above the curtain of deep azure that has shut out the long, thin clouds above — those few small, rosy clouds shading that line of fiery light that outlined all the western hills — are shafts of luminous creamy cloud against the deep blue just above, like the glow from heaven's footlights thrown upon its azure curtain.

Then night comes down. The line of fiery light above the hills dies suddenly and all is darkest blue, while through the needle meshes of a twisted pine the sickle of a clear young moon appears. It is a silver sunset.

The sun god's evening adios is breathed sometimes in silver upon the desert's western rim, luminous gray and deepest blue taking the place of gold and flaming red. This I have heard, and it may be true, but I have never seen it there. The silver sunset that I saw was from a hill behind an old, old mining town, far from my golden desert, and farther to the west. Perhaps — who knows? — while I was looking at blue and silver, the desert sky was glowing with red and gold.

My silver sunset was weird and unusual, revolutionary, shocking one's mental tide into new channels, and it seemed to me as I watched that strange, new thing, that the mighty force ruling the night and day, that brings the light

and shrouds the world in shadow, is sentient, with changing human moods and, wearying with the monotony of its unchanging laws, it played with silver sunsets for a day.

HEAT

There is a heat so great that it seems still.
'Tis not the noontide summer's sweating heat
when the sun's kisses make the spring complete,
when faint winds sometimes stir, and
when the grass drips dew at dawn, when birds
have mated and are very busy, and when the
wood-dove's tuneful call brings a soft abatement
to the torrid day's discomfort; but when
the roads — the color of crushed strawberries
— are fetlock-deep in finest dust, when the
fences are all painted with its powdered, pinkish red,
and when the leaves are bronzed and drooping with their dusty burdens, when broad
flats and upland clearings flash with the tar-weed's glowing gold, when yellowish brown is
all the grass, crisped by long months of blistering sun without a drop of rain, when the very
air seems burned and the sky glows like a
bright blue flame, and only the pine rears a tall,
proud head that's darkly green and cool.
Then the birds' and insects' voices are all mute,
all but the fat quail's laughing call that breaks
the waiting hush. 'Tis all a brown and red
and yellow world, and with my elfin ears I hear

the crisp and crackle of burned, sapless growth, as if all nature but awaits a spark to flare its universe.

The choking air is still as death. Beyond a chaparral crowned hill a tall white column shoots straight up against the blazing blue, then spreads a blue-black thundercloud of smoke across the ridge, while dragon's tongues of glowing flame play along the hills' long curve, against that ever darkening cloud, like foot-lights to a tragedy. Then gray-blue clouds of smoky mist shot through with hazy sun fill all the hollows and the deep gulch beds and spread like gliding ghosts until the whole earth's veiled.

Now birds are screaming, chattering, their homes are burning up, the brush is breaking where the frenzied deer are trampling through, and startled rabbits scurry past, while a hawk cuts across my vision, its talons clutching a smothered quail. For that ominous hush is broken — the universe has flared.

GOLD

A little shack stood in the gulch on the bank of a dried-up creek, the tarweed all about it glowing golden in the late September sun. In front of the shack, ankle-deep in dust, ran a road that was pinkish-red, and it ran from a dead town, miles away, till it lost itself in the hills. Sloping up from the road, across from the house, was a hill that was dark with pines, while across the gulch was a steeper hill that bore only rocks and brush. Up the gulch, where it took a sudden turn, the hills seemed to shut it in, and down the gulch, between the hills, a lovely vista lay, for the folding hills from green to blue melted softly into the sky. In the old creek bed, the seepage water lay in silent pools, with alders arching over them, keeping them dark and cool. Across the road from the little shack, beneath the dark pine slope, a long flat stretches down the gulch, like a huge step in the hill.

On that big hill step, years ago stood a little tented town, and today, if you dig in the dusty road, you will find old, smooth-worn coins, some of them bearing strange mottoes,

some of them oval in shape, and if you pan the dust of the road you will get a little gold, for they sometimes spilled dust from the buck-skin sack which answered for miner's purse. At five o'clock in the afternoon of the longest summer day, the gulch lies deep in shadow, the frogs begin to croak, and the gray mist steals across the flat like the ghost of that tented town.

The shack was just one big square room, its sides, broad redwood boards, pine shakes for roof. A dobe fireplace, at one end, was topped with a big tin pipe. Inside, a fireboard hid from view its ancient blackened throat. Not so picturesque, but warmer, there stood in one corner a modern air-tight stove. On a small, square home-made table was a little coal-oil lamp, and a cracker box for cupboard, nailed to the redwood wall, held all his few utensils. In one corner, piled newspapers ran from rotting floor to roof — they dated to the '60's and had been carefully preserved. On a rudely fashioned framework rested an ancient, rusty spring, and on the faded quilts that padded this, an old, old miner lay.

The miner now wears heavy shoes and long blue overalls; *his* overalls were tucked into knee-high cowhide boots. The miner now goes shaven clean, and his hair, too, is cropped close; this miner's long beard swept his breast, and

his hair was shoulder-long. His friends had long since passed away, or gone to the County Home, but he had lived there sixty years and had sworn he'd die in the hills. The old Forty-niner was keeping his word, for he was dying now. Even the manner of his speech was that of a bygone day, as he turned to speak to the kindly neighbor who attended to his last wants.

"I reckon I'm leavin', Miss Lawton, an' I don't know as I keer, fer the boys has left me plumb alone, an' I'm ready ter jine their camp. I've tore up earth fer sixty year, an' I'm pore as when I come, fer I jist *lived* in '49 an' the lively years arter that. I was quick on the trigger in them ole days, an' the feller what covered me, he had ter be quick, I tell ye now. Ye'll find some specimints under my bunk I tooken from my claims — they'll likely pan right smart o' gold, an'll give ye a little stake. They's all I got fer sixty year o' grubbin' in the ground. I'm honin' ter heft my forty-five, ter feel its good ole grip, but arter I throwed it on the cuss that jumped my richest claim, and the damn gun plumb missed fire, I chucked it in the crick. It done good sarvice in its day when I was a Vigilante, but I ain't never drawed it in no low-down quarrel yit. I placeder an' gophered fer sixty year, an' I ain't got nary dust — I made it, God, I found it! but whiskey and cards come high, an'

flour fifty dollars a sack, an' us boys all hit
the pace — but I placered an' tunneled fer
sixty year, an' I ain't got left one buckskin
sack o' the good ole yellow gold —”

The neighbor softly closed the door and left
him lying silent there, for his golden dream was
done. But in through the open window the
slowly sinking sun threw a kindly golden
blanket over his wasted frame — of the gold
that never pinches out.

NIGHT

The breathing silence of the night holds a mysterious strength. The pines are standing straight and black against the darkened sky; the hills against it, green by day, are black and shadowy. The same birds nestle in the trees, but they are quiet, hidden, and all the stars that through the day have kept their place unseen, are lighted now. No single thing is changed, all things are as they were, save that the recreative, silent mind of night has waked. The sleeping night! 'Twere better far to say the sleeping day. By day all nature steadily works out the scheme that night has planned. The day means action, but the night means force.

Have you not stood at night in some still spot, your face turned to the sky, and felt the throb of mighty forces beat upon your brain; felt, too, the lift of inspiration, the spirit's clearer view, as though the slumbering mind of day had opened eyes refreshed, to draw its curtains, light its lamps, and wake to clarity of thought, to burning intellect, to dreams that

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are more vivid than broad daylight's waking life — wake to strong, resistless impulse, or to still inspired emotion that is the germ of thought.²

A SANITARIUM

There is a land I know whose every task is deferred to mañana. No energy is there, no enterprise, and yet in its own sphere it is working out great nature's plan in the finest of all ways. Dry gulches paved with boulders green are shadowed by willow and water oak and by dark, lofty pine. There the mountain quail will jeer in the sunny light of noon, the mountain lion cry at dusk, and the coyote bark at night, while the gentle wood-dove's ceaseless call and the owl's mournful "too whoo," add a touch of gentler meaning to the voices of the hills. There the mines have all been abandoned and the rancher cannot thrive, and where man placed years ago, the wild has come again. The hills are velvet green with brush, where they are not dark with pine, the sagging, weather-worn gray shacks are empty and silent now, but the sun shines gladly all the time and the sky is ever blue and the men that are left all help each other, for they are mighty few.

In the crowded haunts of men, they say, is the place where a man belongs, to measure his strength with his fellows, to give and take good

blows; but the clearest brain and the strongest arm are brought to the fight by those who come from where still nature has armed them with her strength, not by murdering beautiful feathered things nor the furred ones of the wilds, but the strength that is born of silence and of self-reliant thought. Each one of us needs to draw aside and talk to his soul a spell in God's wide room where the walls are green or gray or purple dark, and the ceiling, a blaze of sunny blue, or a darkened, starry sky, while the tap in his bath is running ever — the ceaseless song of the brook. A herd of cattle shambles by wrapped in a cloud of dust, the lizards flash in the sun, and the blue clad cowboy riding behind dwells in that big room, too. Through a cleft in the hills a single tree shines with the sun's gold splendor, while the rest of the gulch is evening dark. The vista beyond a red, red road, arched over with big dark pines, shows waves of green hills, fold on fold, with blue beyond, then snow.

What are the sights that make men pause and talk to their souls in peace? I cannot tell, for I do not know. But it seems to me that a long, long look into that big, still room brings to the eye a wider vision, and the whisper of good borne on the breeze that sighs through its open door is wafted straight from the peace and strength that abide in its varied beauty.

SUNSHINE HILL

It rears a noble, rounded curve against the northern sky, its breast green velvet with chaparral, its ridge laced deep with pines, and a patch in its chaparral here and there shows sun-dried, yellow grass. The first flash of sun down the gulch in the morning will kiss it a cheery Good Day, and at dusk, when the hills are in deep green shadow and the beds of the gulches are black, its patches of bleached grass shine like gold and its chaparral looks a golden green, for the sun shines there still, not with a blazing radiance, as in the flashing heat of day, but with soft, mellow, red-gold light — a tender, loving, lingering light, as though 'twere loth to leave. And when the sun has slipped away, since go it must at last, when the shining breast of the hill is clothed in dusky green-black shadow, one pine stands forth on its darkening slope, a torch of vivid light. It is the sun's farewell.

Men call that Sunshine Hill. When all the country is drenched with rain, when the hills about have a gloomy look, 'tis the only smiling thing in sight, for the sunlight seems to have pierced its heart and warmed it through and

through until it gives forth a cheery glow through mist or driving rain. Compared with its generous, vital glow, the gleam of the precious yellow metal that lies deep hid in its smiling bosom is but a dull and tawdry thing. When the slopes and gulches about are dark, when the sun has slipped from its highest crest, he lights that pine as a torch and sign that he will come again, and I hear him say in his sunny way, as he finally slips from sight,

“Remember, I’m shining somewhere now, and whatever stands betwixt you and me, I’ll come again to shine on you. And so, my friend, Good Night.”

**WHERE THE GULCHES RUN WITH
RAIN**



DROUGHT

The silent hills capped with tall, scraggy pines
And bearded o'er with brushwood, look upon
The sleeping, sunny valley,
Through which the road, beside the dried up
creek,

Meanders lazily till where two slopes
Drop down to meet it, overlap, and hide
Its gleaming, dusty ribbon.

The horses switch their tails beneath the trees.
The hogs root where they find a spot that's
green.

Hot haze is over all.

The sheriff throbs by in his swift machine,
Answering grim and most unwelcome calls.

No more for him the bronco,
No heavy forty-fives hang from his belt,
No rifle's strapped behind his saddle flap,
But in his side coat pocket

A black and shining deadly automatic,
Which he ne'er uses save to put a hole
Through quail or scuttling rabbit.

And when the sheriff's gone, the tiny draft
He made in passing and the swirls of dust
Add to the throbbing heat.

The gum drips in the heat from sweating pines.
The cattle are all quiet, and the dogs
With lolling tongues are still.
The dull red gashes in the mountain slopes
Run down to meet the rising yellow waves of
sun-parched grass.

The gulches are all dry, and the main creek,
That in its freshet time will float a horse,
Can now be crossed dry-shod.
And in the coolest spot in all the town
Around a table used for cards, sit six
Who play at poker glumly.

There's the teamster come to shoe his mules.
The cowman, too, to have his saddle stitched.
Their throats are dry with dust.

And there's the miner come to buy his grub,
And there's the millman, he who crushes ore.
Quartz dust is choking *them*.

There is the drummer from a far-off town,
And, last, the keeper of this large, bare place —
The Palace Sample Room.

Behind the bar, from well-nigh empty shelves,
Soft drinks smile down on them with wicked
grin.

They are the saddest men in all the world,
For the damn town is dry.

A MINER'S LAMENT

The drivin' rain
Beats on the pane.
An' through the roof,
Not high aloof,
The water makes
Its way 'tween shakes
That air too dry
Ter close the sky.
The pine trees roar
Outside my door.
The wind sweeps round
With swishin' sound,
An', in its lull,
The gulches full
Go roarin' by
With voices high.
Out of reason
This wet season.
'Tain't yet due
Fer a month or two,
An' all this wet
Gives me regret —
My wood ain't cut
Fer the winter yet.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Down in the gulch is a patch of shadow
At the foot of a spreading water oak
Where an icy flowing spring wells up.
Here gather the insect folk.
The water-soaked earth is inky black
In the narrow trough that the spring has made.
The sunlight filtering through the leaves
Weaves a black and gold brocade.
Here's where the fading sunlight throws
His farewell lance of golden light.
Here's where the watercresses grow,
Edging the spring with green leaves bright.
Here buzzes the busy yellow jacket
And assorted flies with their thousand eyes
Given to them to watch their foes,
Since they form the food of a multitude.
And the bee will come with his drowsy hum,
And as soft as a sigh, a butterfly,
And the water-bugs zigzag on the pool,
While big blue dragon-flies flash by.
They are hovering all in the sun's last lance.
As they buzz and dart and drone and float,
Or drift like a lightsome feather,
Their song I can hear with a straining ear,
They are singing it all together,

“ We will work and play through our little day
And we'll follow the sun till the day is done.”

When the lance of golden light has gone
And the lingering sun has set,
The cricket and the katydid
Dance a vocal minuet,
And as they scrape and argue together
It seems I can hear them say,
“ Those foolish day things fly about
And go to bed when the light's put out.
They don't know the way to live just right,
For the time to be up and about is night.”

Bancroft Library

An Alabama woodchuck sat on the fence.
His long and powerful beak
He slowly wiped on the topmost rail.
Then I thought I heard him speak,
“ That *was* a fine dinner. I feel pretty good.
Those bugs that fly through the sunny day
Were nice and hot, and that yellow jacket
Had just the right tang of the pepper-pot.
The honey on that big bee was sweet,
While that cricket and katydid, cool dessert,
Just made my meal complete.”
He scratched his beautiful crimson head,
Then he worked his beak with complacent air.
When a lurking rancher, hunting him,
Found him and shot him there.
“ Dog-gone yer hide, I've hunted ye

Fer two hours an' a half,
An' ye sit there with yer belly full o' apples
On my orchard fence an' laff.
After spilin' my apples on every tree
Ye're as round as an apple yerself, ye be.
With yer sassy, laffin', impudent air
Ye're as fat an' well fed as a millionaire.
I've watched ye fer two months past,
An' I've wasted the mornin' a huntin' ye,
But, darn ye, I got yer at last!"

He *had* been one of the apple thugs
But this time, alas! it was only bugs.

A TOAST

A TOAST

Here's to the care-free cowboy
With spurs six inches long,
Here's to his chaps of Angora,
Here's to his made-up song!

Here's to his little bronco
Who carries him through the brush.
Here's to the Palace Bar Room
Where his cash goes when he's flush!

Here's to the young homesteader
Who's clearing his land of rock.
Here's to his mortgage at the store
On land and buildings and stock!

Here's to the manzanitas
And the land whereon they grow.
Here's to eternal sunshine,
Here's to eternal snow,
Here's to the blazing desert,
Here's to the mountains cold,
Here's to the sunny land so new,
And here's to its pines so old!

ADIOS

WHERE THE TRAILS PART

Sometimes at the crossing of the trails, a fellow wanderer, riding a different road, will give and get the High Sign and pass on.

Stranger, you have ridden a little way with me and I have shown you what my eyes have seen upon this trail. And if, at the next crossing, your bridle hand is itching to swing your horse's head into that faint trail, so little used, and if you hear at its far end a tiny fairy song, why, then, you are no stranger, but my brother. Don't, however, go following the Will-o'-the-Wisp. You'll get off the trail if you do.

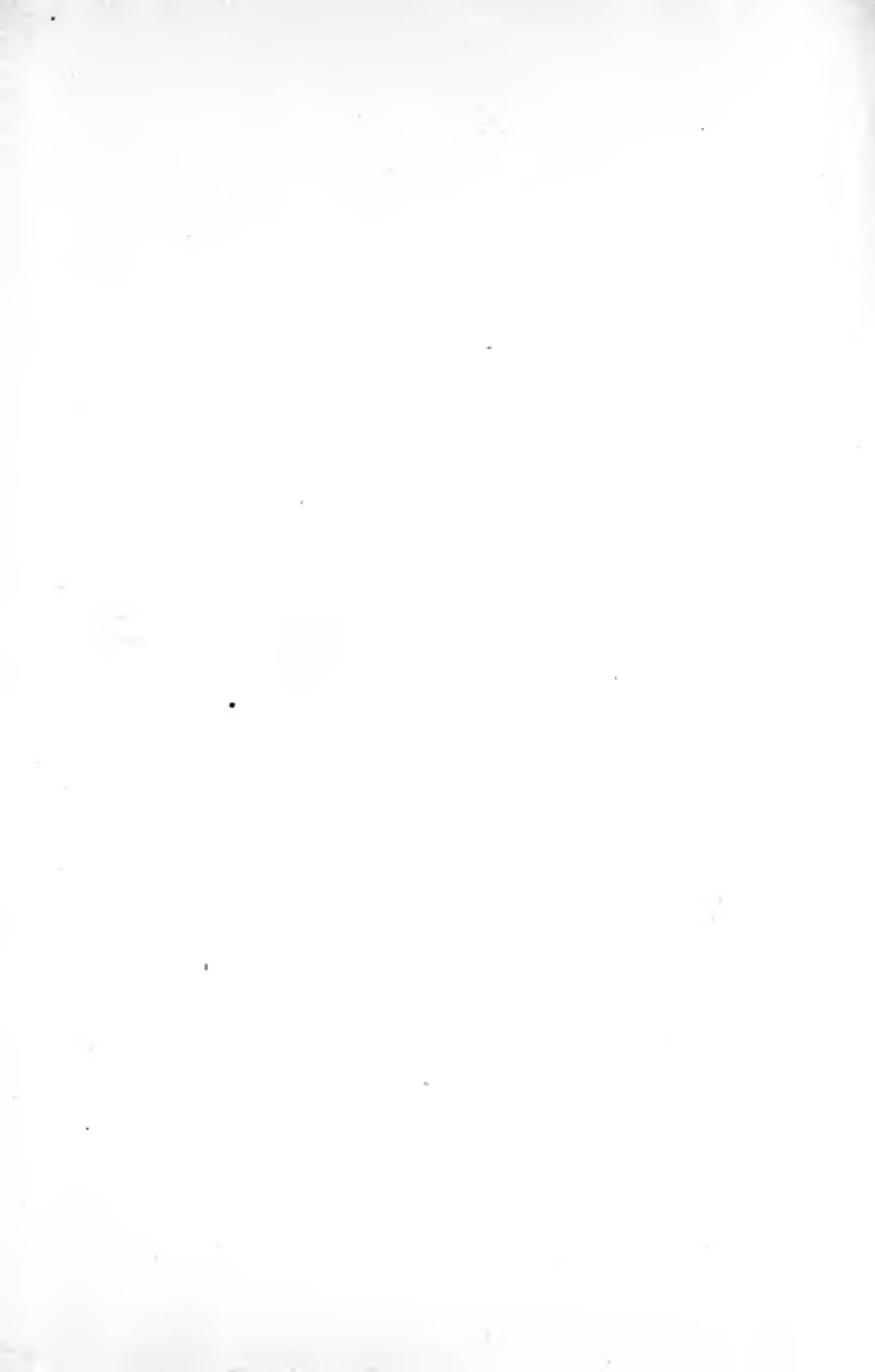
Is my bronco's name Pegasus? Not by a damn sight! He bucks sometimes, but not so bad as *that*. He's just a little ornery son of a gun, an' his name's Will-o'-the-Wisp. I call him Bill for short.

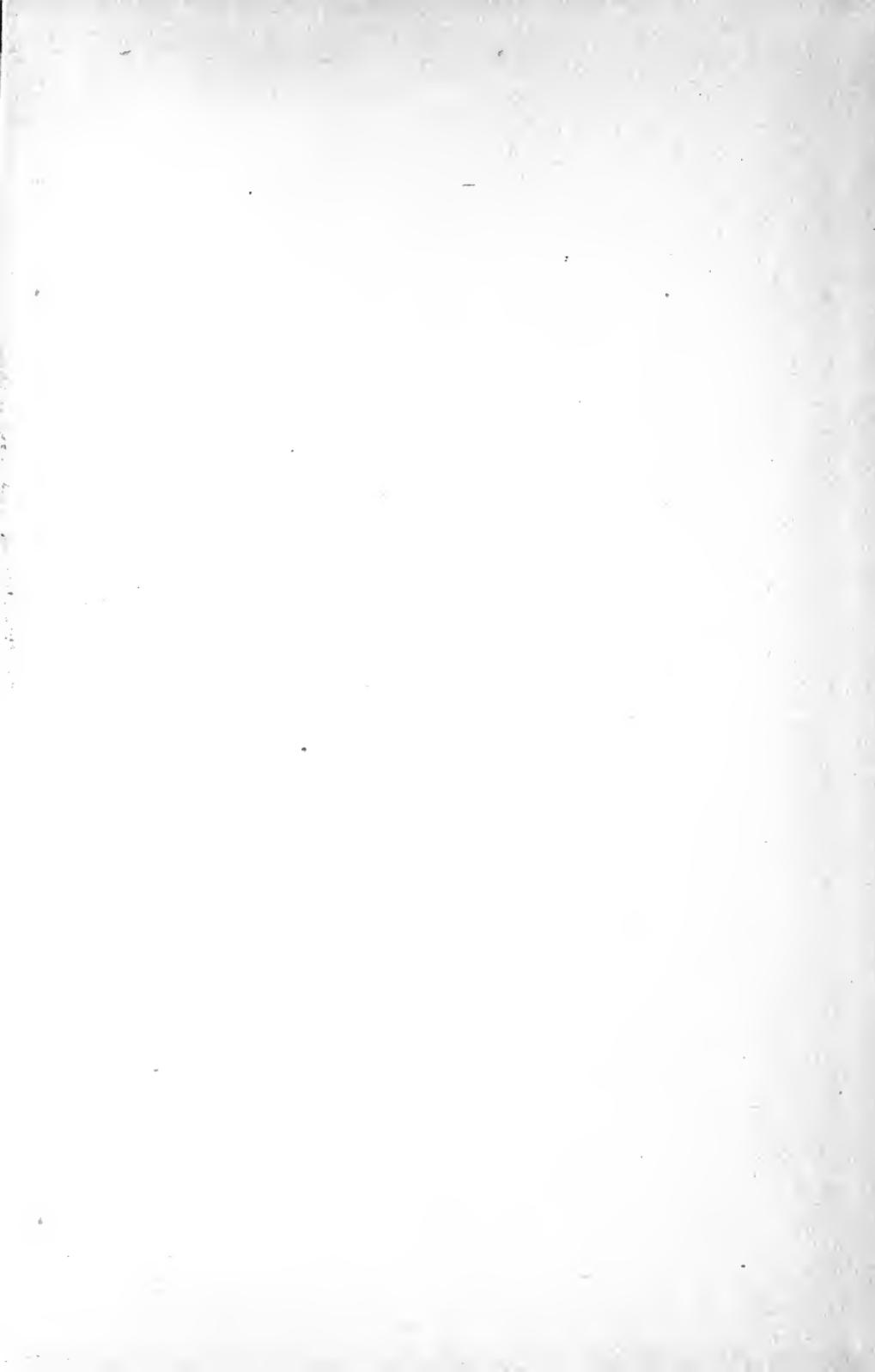
Adios

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